Provisions for the Journey

Volume 1

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point

The hadith discussed in the text is one of the most comprehensive and rewarding

exhortations of the Noble Prophet (S) to one of his most eminent companions by the .name of Abu Dharr

Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

The invaluable legacy of the Household [Ahl al-Bayt] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has given many scholars to the Muslim ummah who, following in the footsteps of Imams of the Prophet's Household ('a), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers .and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defence of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured

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by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the .frontline in consonance with the demands of every age

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and .wholesome human nature

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to

present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shi'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime .school of thought through divine blessing

The Assembly is also engaged in edition and publication of the valuable works of leading Shi'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household ('a) has offered to the entire .world

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the .readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the

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.(Prophet Muhammad (S

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdi, His vicegerent on the earth .((may Allah expedite his advent

We express our gratitude to Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, the author of the present book, and Mr. Kelvin Lembani (Muhammad 'Abd al-'Aziz), its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially .the staff of the Translation Office

Cultural Affairs Department

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly

Lesson ١: The Quality of Servitude and the Path to Eternal Bliss

point

The hadith which we have put forward as the pivot of our discussion is one of the

most comprehensive and rewarding exhortations of the Noble Prophet (S)(١) to one of his most eminent companions by the name of Abu Dharr. The text of this hadith has been recorded in the distinguished books entitled "Makarim al-Akhlaq", "Amali Shaykh Tusi", "Majmu'ah Warram" and "Bihar al-Anwar". With Allah's grace we have quoted it from "Bihar al-Anwar", and we will set about explaining and elucidating it as far as we .can

Abu al-Aswad Du'ili says, "When Abu Dharr was living in exile in Rabadhah, I went to visit him. While I was there with him, he narrated a hadith to me. Abu Dharr said, 'Early one morning, I went to see the Noble Prophet (S) in the Mosque. He was seated with no one present save 'Ali ('a)(٢). After being admitted in His Holiness' audience and subsequent to greeting him with respect, I availed myself

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١ - The abbreviation, "S", stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, sallallahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam [may God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny], which is [.mentioned after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). [ed

٢ - The abbreviation, "'a" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, 'alayhi's-salam, 'alayhim'us-salam, or 'alayha's-salam [may peace be upon him/them/her], which is mentioned after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet's [.progeny, and saints ('a). [ed

of the opportunity and presented my humble request to him. I said 'May my father and mother be thy ransom! Give me a piece of advice by means of which Allah will '.'grant me good

,The Noble Prophet (S) kindly stated"

O Abu Dharr! What a noble man you are, and you are surely reckoned as one of our' "...'household

The grammatical form 'af'il bih' in Arabic functions as an exclamation phrase [sighah ta'ajjub]; that is to say, it is used when a person is surprised at something. For

instance, they say 'ajmil bik' to mean "How beautiful you are!" when they are amazed at the beauty and charm of someone. Therefore, the meaning of 'akrim bik' [in the above-mentioned narration's Arabic text] is "What a noble man you are!"

The application of the term 'noble' [karim] by the Prophet (S) on such a man as Abu Dharr speaks clearly about the eminence, status and rank of that great companion in the perception of His Holiness (S). In addition, in order to lay emphasis on the above statement, the Noble Prophet (S) has included Abu Dharr among his (S) kith and kin, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). (The Noble Prophet (S) has stated the same about Salman Farsi, when he says, "Salman is one of us, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).")

In continuation of the hadith, the Prophet (S) embarks upon advising Abu Dharr:

"I give you advice with the expectation that you will safeguard it and act upon it; because this counsel consists of all

the paths which lead to good and prosperity. If you put this will and counsel into practice, the good of both the world and hereafter will become inexpensive for you."

The term 'will' in the above statement means a piece of advice and exhortation, not the will [or testament] that is made at the time of someone's death. Also 'tariq' and 'sabil' both denote road, but 'tariq' connotes a wide and main route while 'sabil' means a subsidiary course.

Two meanings can be inferred from the term 'kiflan': one is that it denotes additional and the second meaning is twofold mercy. The Gracious Qur'an has employed 'kiflan' in the second sense, that is to say twofold mercy.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ وَآمَنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ...

"O you who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah and believe in his Apostle: He will give you two portions of his mercy..."(1)

Therefore, the purport of the Noble Prophet's (S) words will be as follows: If you put

my advice into practice, you will attain twofold and additional good. But the second possibility is that 'kiflan' connotes the world and the hereafter, in which case the meaning of the sentence shall be: If you act upon what I have said, you will have attained the prosperity of the world and the hereafter for yourself.

Worship and the perception of Allah

"O Abu Dharr! Worship Allah as though you are seeing Him, because if you do not see Him, He nevertheless sees you."

If this part of the

۱- Surat al-Hadid ۵۷:۲۸.

hadith has not been reported recurrently, then at least it is equivalent to successive narration and has been related by various channels and mainly by Abu Dharr and with different expressions. In regard to this meaning, it has thus been narrated in another hadith:

"Goodness means that you ought to worship Allah as if you see Him..."(۱)

Maybe the best advice for Abu Dharr, a man who has been trudging the path of devotion to Allah for many long years and a person who aspires to derive optimum benefit from the Prophet's (S) recipes in order to attain felicity is to inculcate in him the method of procuring benefit from worship and open a way in front of him that leads to acquiring the best fruits from his acts of adoration, and that implies having the presence of heart during worship.

The means of attaining the presence of heart is practice and exercise and perceiving the presence of Allah: that is to say man ought to always perceive himself in the presence of Allah and close to Him, because if man becomes fond of Allah, never does he get tired of conversing with Him and listening to His words; for the reason that the more the lover is in the presence of his beloved and speaks with Him, the thirstier he

.becomes for more love

The reason why we quickly get tired when performing our acts of worship and why we recite our prayers with haste and with the intention of quickly

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۵, section [bab] ۱, p. ۱۱۶ -۱

embarking upon our daily duties, and the reason why not only do we not feel any pleasure from worship but reckon that we are trapped in a cage once prayer takes long is because we do not perceive before whom we are standing and with whom we are talking! It is possible for us to discern our status of servitude in regard to Allah and conceive His lofty position and greatness by means of acquired knowledge, but this acquired knowledge has not had any effect on our hearts and does not give fruit to .real affinity with Allah

That which causes real and true connection with Allah is the presence of heart when we are performing acts of devotion. The only acts of worship which we are successful at fulfilling only serve to clear us from religious obligation and we do not derive the kind of benefit which we ought to gain because our acts of devotion have no life-giving spirit and are discharged without the presence of heart. Pre-occupation with worldly affairs is an impediment to rapport with Allah and the presence of heart .during acts of devotion, and that is the problem with which we are faced

It is always asked that what ought we to do in order to acquire presence of heart when performing acts of devotion? Attaining the presence of heart needs strict exercise and self-discipline. In the beginning, man has to sit in solitude and contemplate that Allah is seeing him. Some ethical mentors used

to recommend making use of imaginative aspects of the mind during this exercise; that is to say that if you are in spiritual retreat in a room and/or are spending your

days in a secluded place, imagine that a man is hidden and is watching your conduct .and that you do not see him

Is your behavior the same when someone is watching you with when no one is watching you? Especially when that person is not an ordinary man but a person you consider as of great importance and believe that your destiny lies in his hands? You are desirous of being beloved by him and of him loving you. Can you in this case ?completely pay no heed to him and get busy with other matters

If man, with the help of exercise, conceives this point that he is in the presence of Allah and that Allah constantly looks at him and even if man himself does not see Allah, Allah nonetheless sees him, he will bit by bit attain presence of heart when performing acts of worship and such kind of worship has a life-giving spirit. This kind of worship will not only result in clearing us from duty, but will result in spiritual progress, ascendance through the stations of perfection and nearness to Allah. :Without doubt, Imam 'Ali's ('a) words bear witness to this issue

Beware of disobeying Allah in solitude because the Witness of that situation is also" (the Judge."(١

It is therefore necessary for people who

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٣١۶, wisdom [hikmat] ٣١۶, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١

have not yet had practice to have presence of heart during prayer to set aside some time during the course of the day for sitting in seclusion and concentrating on this point that Allah is seeing them. Of course, there is no doubt that man is always in the presence of Allah and Allah sees him; as the Noble Qur'an hints at this reality in :several instances, among them

يَعْلَمُ خائِنَهَ الأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِی الصُّدُورِ

(He knows the stealthy looks and that which the breasts conceal."(١"

:In his short sayings, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

O people! Fear Allah who is such that when you speak He hears and when you" conceal a secret (in your hearts) he knows it. Prepare yourself to meet death which will overtake you even if you run away, catch you even if you stay and remember you (even if you forget it."(٢

In the first section of this hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) has cited worship as man's key .to prosperity

Thereafter, in the following sections, he begins to explain the stages that worship of Allah consists of. In addition to that, in the first section of the hadith, recommendation has been made with respect to the quality of worship and the fact that acts of devotion ought to have a life-giving spirit, and that spirit is the presence of heart, and in reality, no mention with regard to the origin of worship has been made, as though .that point has been taken for granted

Worship And Adoration Of Allah Is A Means Of Ascending And Rising Through The Stations Of Perfection For The Believers

It is worthy of

.Surat al-Mu'min (or Ghafir) ۴۰:۱۹ -١
.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ١١٧٨, wisdom [hikmat] ١٩۴, trans. Fayd al-Islam -٢

mentioning that the nature of man is concealed in devotion and adoration of Allah and man without worship has no distinction of freedom of choice over the other animals and only enjoys existential privileges, without having discharged their right (without having earned those privileges himself). A person who abstains from worshiping Allah has in reality closed the road towards human perfection on himself because attaining .human perfection is only feasible by this means

If we pay attention to the ways of life of great men, we notice that one of the

inseparable principles of their lives is devotion to Allah. All the people who had the merit of achieving the status of ‘Kalimullah (the Interlocutor of Allah)’, ‘Khalilullah (the Friend of Allah)’, and ‘Habibullah (the Friend of Allah)’ only arrived at those lofty stations by means of traversing this course and undergoing hard and difficult trials. Not even one individual can be found who attained [even] one perfection from the volitional perfections of man without devotional servitude to Allah. In addition to what has been said, achieving stations such as the stations of contentment, certitude et .cetera et cetera have to be searched for in the adoration of Allah

:Allah in the Qur’an states

وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّکَ حَتَّی يَأْتِيکَ الْيَقِينُ

(And serve your Lord until there comes to you that which is certain.”(١“

And with regard to the station of being well pleased with whatever Allah decrees :[maqam-i rida], it says

... وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّکَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا وَمِنْ آنَاءِ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَاَطْرَافَ

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.Surat al-Hijr ١٥:٩٩ -١

النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّکَ تَرْضَی

Bear then patiently what they say, and glorify your Lord by the praising of Him...“ before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and during the hours of the night do (also glorify Him and during parts of the day, that you may be well pleased.”(١

The mission of all the Prophets (‘a) has been to direct people towards adoration and :worship of Allah

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِی كُلِّ اُمَّهٍ رَسُولاً أَن اعْبُدُوا اللهَ واجْتَنِبُوا الطّاغُوتَ...

And certainly we raised in every nation an apostle saying: ‘Serve Allah and shun the“

(shaitan...’”(٢

One of the subjects on which the Gracious Qur’an lays great emphasis is that everything in existence is preoccupied with worshiping Allah, whether they like it or :not

يُسَبِّحُ لِلّهِ مَا فِى السَّموات وَمَا فِى الأَرْضِ...

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth declares the glory of“ (Allah...”(٣

But this glorification is existential and performs no function in the perfection of man. What plays a role in the perfection of man is worship done of his own volition, and in other than this case stones and the mountains too would attain their ultimate .perfection by means of existential worship

The importance and value of worship and devotion to Allah reaches an extent where Allah, the Exalted, states in the Gracious Qur’an that the ultimate goal of creating the :jinn and mankind is worship

وَمَا خَلَقْتَ الْجِنَّ وَالإِنْسَ الاّ لِيَعْبُدُونِ

And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should worship“

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١- ٢٠:١٣٠ Surat Ta Ha.

٢- ١٦:٣٦ Surat al-Nahl.

٣- ٦٢:١ Surat al-Jumu‘ah.

(Me.”(١

In addition to what has been said, the sense of worship is man’s natural disposition; that is to say, the need for worship has been kneaded and concealed in the essence of man and this truth that no nation or community has ever existed that did not engage in worship and adoration of one kind or another can be inferred from studying the

.history of religions and nations

The stages of worship of Allah

a) Knowledge of Allah

In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) embarks upon propounding the :stages of worship

Know O Abu Dharr that the first stage of devotion to Allah is knowledge of Him. Verily," He is the first before whom there is none, He is the One and the Only, and there is none like Him. He is the Everlasting, the Eternal. He is the One who created the heavens and the earth and that which is between them. Allah is the Knowing, the Kind ".and He is capable of doing anything

In this section, the first stage of worship mentioned is knowledge of Allah; of course, cognition of Allah has a great deal of stages, but that which is necessary in worship and adoration of Allah is a general awareness of Him; man ought to know that Allah exists and He is the Creator of man and the world. If this stage of knowledge is not .attained by man, the turn does not come for worship and adoration of Allah

For this reason, this stage of knowledge is prior to worship. Of course, at

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.Surat al-Dhariyat ۵۱:۵۶ -۱

the ultimate destination of his spiritual journey towards his perfection, man reaches the highest stages of cognition and awareness especially reserved for the saints [awliya'] of Allah, and we [the ordinary people] cannot find our way to its reality and truth. We know in brief that the ultimate knowledge which the saints [awliya'] of Allah attain at the end of their spiritual wayfaring is very valuable and high and that it is the .last phase of devotion to Allah

After man has attained the first stage of worship and has perceived that Allah does exist, it is incumbent to meditate upon the attributes and effects of Allah in order for

that knowledge to become firm, grounded and constant so that it does not only remain as a mental conception but is turned into a present and lively awareness that leaves an impression on man. This stage of cognition and knowledge which goes with .[reflection is called ‘medium knowledge’ [ma‘rifat-i mutawassit

Medium knowledge itself has different stages and covers a wide spectrum and man can attain those stages by way of meditation and reflection on divine signs and also by means of practical acts of devotion. It has become clear from what has been said that meditation about the divine attributes and effects and also knowing Allah better is itself worship and a kind of volitional deed and that awareness, which is one of the preliminaries of worship, is attained along with it. (Meditation and reflection about divine signs is a

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proximate prerequisite [muqaddamah qaribah] of cognition and attending class and (.[studying books is the remote precondition [muqaddamat-i ba‘idah

b) Belief in the Prophet (S) and acknowledgement of his divine mission

At the second stage you ought to believe in me and acknowledge that Allah, the“ Exalted, has appointed me to be the giver of glad tidings, the admonisher, the caller ”...towards Allah by His permission and the light of guidance for all mankind

Every one of the attributes mentioned in the hadiths and Qur’an about the Noble Prophet (S) stand in need of explanation and interpretation, and if our faith in the Noble Prophet’s (S) divine mission becomes strong and complete, we will not get ensnared in a great number of doubts. The lack of adequate knowledge and faith in regard to the Noble Prophet (S) in a lot of Muslims of weak faith results in their getting entangled in skepticisms and by the passage of time they get deviated from the correct path and in the end, Allah forbid, they are drawn towards disbelief; the reason for this is because they have not believed that whatever the Noble Prophet (S) says is .correct

Some people of weak faith say that the Islamic laws which the Noble Prophet (S)

brought are not binding in our age. These injunctions and decrees were meant for bringing order to the disorderly state of the people of the Arabian Peninsula in the age !of the Noble Prophet (S) and there is no more need for Islamic laws in our age

This [vain] talk is a result of their

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not having faith in Allah's Prophet (S), and if they had faith in the Noble Prophet's (S) words in which he stated, "I have been sent to all mankind", they would not have placed any limitations of time on his prophetic mission. In reality, it must be said that all the deviations that appear in religion are a result of weak faith in both Allah's .Prophet (S) and the fruits of his divine mission

(c) Love for the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a

The third stage is love for my Ahl al-Bayt ('a), those whom Allah has cleansed and" ".purified from every kind of impurity

It can generally be said that the greatness of knowing the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and their high position and loving them reaches an extent where Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, begins his political-divine will with the Noble Prophet's (S) saying, "Verily I leave two priceless things for you, the Book of Allah and my [pure] progeny..." Perhaps it was surprising to the people of the world that in his final will the leader of the great Islamic revolution prides himself on following that Pure and Infallible .(Household of the Noble Prophet (S

We do not know what lies [concealed] in this love and affection for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and dependence on knowledge and cognition of them and we may likely construe it to be a simple matter and mistakenly imagine that we ought to love the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) because they are the children and relatives of the Allah's Prophet

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S). If it were like this, they would not have been introduced as being equivalent and)

the same with the Gracious Qur'an. Emphasis upon love for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) is not on account of their being the Noble Prophet's (S) near ones, for the reason that the Noble Prophet (S) had several wives and no such recommendation has been made in regard to any one of them but this emphasis is because Allah has purified them from .every kind of impurity

Likening the Ahl al–Bayt to Noah's ('a) vessel and the gate of repentance for the Children of Israel

Know O Abu Dharr! The Honored and Glorified Lord has made my Ahl al-Bayt ('a) like" the vessel of Noah ('a), upon which everyone who embarked got saved and whoever did not embark got drowned. Likewise, they are similar to the gate of repentance [bab hittah] for the Children of Israel which provided safety from the punishment to ".anyone who entered it

The Noble Prophet's (S) emphasis on love for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and his likening them to the gate of repentance for the Children of Israel is not a sentimental issue so that some people might mistakenly imagine that the natural love and affection of the Noble Prophet (S) for his children and near ones caused him to always make recommendations and advices about friendship and fondness for them, but these counsels go beyond natural love and affection and are made as a result of his believing that the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are the ship of salvation for the Islamic ummah (universal community of the Muslims) and

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for the reason that he is convinced that every person lost and bewildered in the valley of perplexity will get saved from drowning in the sea full of turbulence, contortion and deviations, in the same way that Noah's ('a) community got saved from divine damnation by embarking upon Noah's ship and those who disobeyed, amongst them .Noah's son, perished and got annihilated

At the beginning of the Islamic call, when there was no talk about division and disagreement as yet in the Islamic ummah, the Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr

that the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are similar to Noah's ('a) vessel. Man perishes if he has no connection with them and if he does not emulate them. In reality, this is an admonition and advice to the Muslims who succumb to deviations, fanaticisms and discords that appear at the same time with the Noble Prophet's (S) passing away and to a number of opportunists and double-tongued hypocrites who robbed other human beings of opportunities that the only people who can save the Islamic ummah from danger and collapsing into aberration, misguidance and deviation are the Pure and Infallible Ahl .al-Bayt ('a), with 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) at their head

Thereafter, the Noble Prophet (S) likens his Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a) to the gate of deliverance [bab hittah] for the Children of Israel (these two similes, the similitude to Noah's ('a) vessel and the similitude to the gate of deliverance of the Children of Israel have been

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narrated in a great number of hadiths by both the Sunnis and Shi'ahs and have reached the extent of successive transmission). When the Children of Israel were afflicted by divine wrath as a result of their sin and oppression, and when they wandered for forty years in the wilderness, out of His mercy and as a result of their penance, grief and turning back to Him, Allah once more opened the door of .repentance for them

:About this, the Qur'an states

And when We said: 'Enter this city, then eat from a plenteous (food) wherever you..." wish, and enter the gate making obeisance, and say, forgiveness.' We will forgive you (your wrongs and give more to those who do good (to others)."(١

Every person who entered the gate, in addition to attaining honor and prosperity, also got their sins forgiven. The Noble Prophet's (S) intention in citing this similitude is to explain this point that in the same way that the Children of Israel secured their earthly and other worldly salvation by means of entering the gate of repentance, the Muslims too will guarantee their worldly and heavenly welfare if they enter the door of

.knowledge and cognition of the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and follow them

The word ‘hittah’ literally means spilling and destroying; by saying this word the Children of Israel were asking for forgiveness and the destruction of their sins. Allah made it a means of attaining their forgiveness. But a group among them did not have faith

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.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٥٨ -١

in Allah; they took Allah’s word for a mockery and according to what has been recorded in the hadiths, in place of the word ‘hittah’ they pronounced the word ‘hantah’ which means wheat. Allah sent down upon them His divine wrath because of :their moral corruption and their refusing to repent and seek forgiveness

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلاً غَيْرَ الَّذِى قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزاً مِنْ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ

Those who were unjust changed it for a saying other than that which had been“ spoken to them, so We sent upon those who were unjust a pestilence from heaven, (because they transgressed.”(١

The Noble Prophet (S) presented the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) as the gate whom following and obeying are a cause of worldly and heavenly prosperity and freedom from eternal retribution, but the people did not accept his word and instead of the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), they appointed other people and never used to see any difference between Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and the others and they used to fantasize that in the same way that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is the son in law of the Noble !Prophet (S), ‘Uthman, too, was the Noble Prophet’s (S) son in law

The other message of this section of the hadith is that the most fundamental stage of worship consists of matters of the heart and inner deeds; that is to say, no person can derive enough benefit from worship unless he has knowledge, faith in Allah, love

.Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٥٩ -١

for the Pure and Infallible Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and conviction in the Noble Prophet (S). For this reason, adoration is not confined to external matters and outward deeds, but the origin and roots of devotion are inner conceptions and all acts of worship that spring .from the heart

Lesson ٢: The Need for Deriving Correct Benefit from Allah’s Blessings

point

O Abu Dharr! Act upon my advice so that you may become prosperous in both worlds.“ O Abu Dharr! The majority of people are defrauded of two graces and they do not appreciate them: one is the blessing of health and the other is the grace of leisure .((and ease

O Abu Dharr! Make the most of five things before five [other] things befall you: make“ the most of your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your ”.ability before inability, your leisure before your toil and your life before death

Man is always striving to secure his prosperity and he makes every effort to achieve it; in other words, prosperity is man’s natural object of desire and primary goal. For this reason, man strives to bring to hand what gives rise to bliss and to attain the roots .of success and to know the way of attaining prosperity

That is why the Noble Prophet (S) emphasizes that if his words are acted upon, man will attain his natural object of desire; that is to say man will bring to hand both worldly and heavenly prosperity and if the human being does not put into practice what the

Noble Prophet (S) has advised, he gets deprived of that prosperity. This emphasis is meant to bring about more preparedness and acceptance in man, like the doctor’s emphatic advice to his patient to definitely follow the directions on the prescription so

as to recuperate his health, otherwise there is no doubt that man visits the doctor to :recover his well-being. After that emphasis, the Noble Prophet (S) states

".O Abu Dharr! Most people are robbed of two graces: leisure and health"

Health and leisure, two unknown favors

Health and leisure are two priceless blessings which Allah, the Exalted, has granted to mankind, but most people do not appreciate its value and easily lose it. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) advices Abu Dharr to appreciate the value of these .two blessings and not to easily lose them like the other people

Allah, the Exalted, has placed countless and priceless graces at man's disposal but man easily loses them, perhaps owing to the fact that he expended no effort at acquiring them. Not only does he not discharge their right, but also uses them in an .iniquitous way; a manner which not only does not benefit him, but harms him as well

Health is one of the priceless blessings which a man in good condition pays no heed to and only knows its worth once he gets afflicted by illness, like the fish which swims in .water and does not appreciate its value until it is removed from the water

Not long ago, a frightening

p: ٢١

thing happened to one of our friends; he narrated that while giving a sermon on the pulpit, he suddenly lost his voice and no matter how much he tried to continue his sermon, he failed. Finally, he came down from the pulpit and was taken to the hospital .where, by Allah's grace and favor, he got well after a while

Man rarely meditates upon Allah's graces; blessings such as the power of speech, and hardly thanks Allah for that blessing. He only reflects about it the moment that his voice is lost and he no longer has the power to speak. All too often, he is ready to give .up all his wealth at that moment of need

For a moment we ought to reflect about health and meditate over what blessing is

higher than being healthy and free from a thousand diseases which threaten our bodies and that we are not even afflicted by any one of them. For that reason, we are enjoying the benefits of enormous wealth at every moment, even though this health .is not stable and permanent and is likely to be lost at every moment

:Word like this has been recorded elsewhere, that the Noble Prophet (S) stated

"There are two blessings that are always not thanked for: health and security."(١)

Leisure is the second blessing which the Noble Prophet (S) has hinted at, and it denotes ease and the lack of trouble. Man is faced with different conditions and situations in his life. He spends some of

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٨١, p. ١٧٠, section [bab] ١ -١

those opportunities at leisure and ease and he can contemplate about himself and perceive the concealed aspects of his being and more often than not it happens that .he intends to remedy his ethical and psychological deviations

He plans to meditate about his destiny and to sit in solitude in a secluded corner to embark upon worship and/or study with peace of mind. For every reason, physical and psychological tranquility reigns over his entire being and this peace has presented a golden opportunity for him to derive the utmost advantage from opportunities and make use of every moment in the direction of his perfection. In contrast, it is possible that man gets confronted by a period in his life which, for different reasons, he is deprived of leisure and ease and regrets every moment of it, but what benefit is there in such regret because time lost is never regained. With :regard to making the most of opportunities, Imam 'Ali ('a) says

"Opportunities and life pass like a cloud, therefore perceive good opportunities."(١)

Problems sometimes arise as a result of being entangled in family issues and bearing the responsibilities of children and wife, and at other times they spring up because of

social occupations and public responsibilities. These problems absorb all the spiritual and physical abilities of a human being and do not afford man a moment's opportunity to meditate. In the period after the Islamic revolution in Iran, a lot of government officials had gotten affected by this condition and they

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.Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, vol. ۱۶, p. ۸۴, section [bab] ۹۱ -۱

.did not even have a break to attend to their personal affairs

In contrast, some people are always pursuing vain amusements, and do not even know how to make use of the time of their invaluable lives. They do not know whether they should solve the crossword puzzle in the newspaper or they should spend the hours of the night watching television films? Or should they sit watching sports news? Or get busy with playing chess? They are like a person who has amassed a lot of wealth and searches for a place where he can set it on fire bit by bit, and derive pleasure from watching that. If we encountered such a man, we would surely say that he were mad, heedless of the fact that many of us are afflicted by this same insanity and are busy burning the capital of our lives, life itself, which is by no means .comparable to the wealth of this world, in the fire of sensual desire

In reality, this kind of a person has to be called a loser and a man swindled, because a swindled man is he who exchanges his priceless merchandise for valueless goods or gets less than their worth. There is no asset so prized that it can be compared to life, and it cannot be sold at a price less than paradise. Owing to this fact, appreciate the value of leisure before it is lost and take up work that is more profitable and praiseworthy than

.the rest of the occupations

Youth is a period of Vitality And Liveliness

O Abu Dharr! Make the most of five things before five other things: the first is to“ ”...make the most of youth before old age

The short period of youth, which is accompanied by happiness and vigor, is considered as the best period of man’s life and has a special reckoning. Even if life and living are great favors on the whole, but still youth is a twofold blessing. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) initially mentions the period of young age and lastly hints at the importance of the principle of life itself. Despite that the period of life includes the period of youth as well His Holiness (S) has cited it at the beginning .(because this age is viewed with special importance by the Noble Prophet (S

Imam Khomeini, may Allah be pleased with him, repeatedly used to say, “O Youths! Comprehend and make the most of the period of youth.” The reason is because the blessing of youth is the highest grace which if made use of in a correct and commendable manner can raise man and make him ascend through the spiritual stations towards Allah, something which is less likely to be attained during the period of old age. That is why this truth has been explicitly stated in the words of the Imams ,(‘a) too, and in this regard, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) says

The Qur’an gets mixed with the flesh and blood of every believing youth who“

p: ۲۵

(recites it.”(۱

The period of youth is a period of flexibility and accepting the truth. During this age man can build himself and free his self from ugly traits. It is during the period of youth :that man

;a) gets influenced by the truth more than any other period

;b) enjoys a healthy body and can easily discharge his social obligations

c) can perform his religious duties in the best possible form because of having a ;strong body and spirit

;d) possesses enough strength for remedying ethical vices

;e) can achieve high academic levels by making use of his body and mind

;f) is most likely to have a strong will and iron resolution

;g) can, without feeling tired, think well and meditate for hours on end

.h) can firmly establish in himself virtuous attributes and practices at a high level

And vice versa old age is a period of weakness and decrepitude, a time of the final shaping of man's personality and of inflexibility; and in brief, it is a period of the predominance of physical infirmity and psychological feebleness.

In the Glorious Qur'an, old age has been referred to as 'shayb (hoary)' in three instances and it has been interpreted as 'shaykh (old age)' in four cases. And in most occasions, the natural weakness of this age has either been explicitly stated or hinted at; for example, it has been stated about Prophet Zakariya ('a):

قالَ رَبِّ اِنِّی وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّی وَاشْتَعَلَ الرَّأسُ شَیْبًا...

"He said: My Lord! Surely my bones are weakened and my head

p: ۲۶

۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷, p. ۳۰۵.

flares with hoariness, and, my Lord! I have never been unsuccessful in my prayer to Thee..."(۱)

And likewise, with regard to the stages of man's life, it states:

... ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّهٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَیْبَهً...

"...Then he gave strength after weakness, then ordained weakness and hoary hair after strength..."(۲)

In the rest of the explanations the Qur’an has in one way or another hinted at the) (.disability and feebleness that goes with old age

Therefore, the period of youth is a very precious opportunity for cleansing oneself of ethical vices, a thing which is very hard to do during old age, but unfortunately man does not believe anything without feeling or experiencing it; that is to say, he does not understand the pain of elderliness until he has aged, and no matter how many times the difficulties of this period are made known to him, he still does not acknowledge .the truth as it ought to be admitted

We have witnessed great people who possessed very lofty moral perfections, but one point of moral weakness had remained in them which they either had not recognized during their period of adolescence or they had not undertaken to correct it. For whatever reason, that weak point had remained like an incurable chronic illness in .their personalities

The Need For Appreciating Health And Ability

The second is that man ought to make the most of his health before getting afflicted .by illness

.The third is that man ought to make the most of his ability before his inability

If you are able to cope

۱- ۱۹:۴ .Surat Maryam

۲- ۳۰:۵۴ .Surat al-Rum

with your life, no matter how simple and plain it is, and economic needs have not made you dependent on other people, you ought to appreciate and make the most of this blessing before, Allah forbid, you are afflicted by abject poverty and distress and you become dependent on other human beings for the daily management of your life. If at the present there are simple facilities at your disposal and you can spend the day

with contentment and carry on with your studies, you ought to make the most of this opportunity and apprehend the day when you will be compelled to quit your studies and get occupied with other jobs for the acquisition of the daily needs of this same simple life. If you can presently pass the days of your life ascetically, make use of the opportunity at hand and instead of thinking about privations and wants, contemplate about what you possess at the present moment and appreciate it. The period of your self-sufficiency is a good time for you to help others; for this reason hold the hands of .the needy before the arrival of the turn of poverty and destitution

It is necessary to pay heed to this point that poverty and deprivation which result in disgrace do not accord with the noble status of the human being, and they have been rebuked as forbidden attributes. Allah does not approve of lowliness for his slaves, but desires honor and glory for them. Therefore, man has

to make utmost effort to reduce his dependence on other people and strive to the last extent of his ability to confront poverty by adopting values such as contentment, magnanimity of taste, abstinence from pomp and avoidance of waste, have to be well .learned and acted upon

The fourth point is that the human being ought to make the most of the period of .leisure and ease before the arrival of the period of entanglement

A lot of discussion has been held in regard to the contents of this sentence, but it is necessary to be reminded that the Noble Prophet's (S) intention is not that one ought to shirk from obligations and refuse to shoulder social responsibilities and rather prefer unemployment. This is a negative perception. As likely as not, the Noble Prophet's (S) intention is that you ought to appreciate the value of these treasured moments when you can freely choose and decide without imposition and make use of these opportunities to make the best choices before you are compelled to accept uncalled for responsibilities and imposed duties and before you are divested of the .power to choose of your own accord

.The fifth is that man ought to make the most of life before the arrival of death

The blessing of life is a comprehensive and complete favor which has been mentioned after the rest of the graces. In reality, all the other blessings are affixed to the gift of life. If there were no life, there would remain

p: ٢٩

no room for the other graces. For this reason, the root and fountainhead of the rest of the gifts is the blessing of the life of this world, which has freely been given by Allah to his slaves and even if man enjoys the life of the hereafter after death, but still he gets deprived of the ability to perform volitional deeds, to freely choose and to make decisions. It is there that he regrets his past life, losing opportunities and making bad choices, and he requests to return to the world in order to make up for past vices, but .his petition will not be granted

حَتَّى إِذا جَاءَ اَحَدَهُمْ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلِّى اَعْمَلُ صالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلاّ اِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمَنْ وَرائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ اِلى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

Until when death overtakes one of them, he says: ‘Send me back, my Lord, send me“ back. Haply I may do good in that which I have left.’ By no means! It is a (mere) word (that he speaks; and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised.”(١

Some of the great men used to recommend that at the time of sleeping, you ought to imagine that this sleep may possibly not have an awakening and the Angel of Death :will seize your soul in the state of sleep, because the Glorious Qur’an states

اللهُ يَتَوَفَّى الأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا والَّتِى لَمْ تَمُتْ فِى مَنَامِهَا...

Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that“

p: ٣٠

.Surat al-Mu’minun ٢٣:٩٩-١٠٠ -١

(die not during their sleep…”(1)

The soul almost gets separated from the body during sleep, and if the hour of man’s death arrives, it gets completely detached from his body; it is for this reason that in continuation of the same blessed verse, Allah states:

... فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِی قَضَی عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الأُخْرى إِلی اَجَلٍ مُسَمَّی... سوره الزمر: ۴۲

“…Then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed term; most surely there are signs in this for those who reflect…”

In reality, man travels half the journey towards death when he sleeps; that is why great men have advised that at the time of sleeping, imagine that after the soul has been separated from the body, it will never again return, and when you wake up, you must thank Allah that He has granted existence to your body once again and He has granted you life once more.

To put it another way, you should imagine that you have gone to purgatory (the interval between life and death), and that your unworthy deeds have become apparent, and that you are being called to account for them and you are under admonition, and at that time you ask the angels which are residing in the proximity of Allah to let you return to the world and as per your request they grant you the permission; now that you have returned to the world and you have once again got

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۱- Surat al-Zumar ۳۹:۴۲.

the chance to perform works, what are you going to do and how are you going to be?

We ought to appreciate the value of this second chance and make the most of every moment of it because a time will come when man will deeply desire for saying just one “la ilaha illa Allah (There is no deity save Allah)” and according to the words of Imam ‘Ali (‘a):

Whoever falls short of performing good deeds falls into grief, and Allah has nothing" to do with him who spares nothing from his wealth in the name of Allah."(۱)

Lesson ۳: Correct Perception of the Realities of Life and Making Optimum Use of [Man's] Lifespan

Making Timely Use Of Opportunities And Keeping Protracted Hopes At Bay

O Abu Dharr! [Beware] lest you procrastinate praiseworthy deeds on account of your" ".protracted hopes

This expression is a completion of the Noble Prophet's (S) previous saying and it) underscores making timely use of opportunities and not wasting opportunities or (.moments of life

Procrastination [taswif] is one of the cankers of the soul which obstructs the fulfillment of good and praiseworthy deeds and that is why it has been an object of distain in the hadiths. Procrastination denotes putting obligations off with the hope of discharging them later. This state can be caused by a great deal of factors, but its chief and primary cause—as has been mentioned in this section—is man's delusive dreams; that is to say, man does not discharge today's obligations in the hope of staying alive until tomorrow when he will carry them out. When the following day arrives, he again plays for time and hopes for the

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۴۶, pithy aphorisms ۱۲۲, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

other day and thus months and years pass while he puts off his work. The Noble Prophet (S) states that if you desire to cleanse your inner self of this quality and attribute, you ought to imagine that you only have this very day and hour and moment .and you will not have another opportunity to live after this

The concept of procrastination, like a great number of other ethical concepts, ranging from moral virtues to vices, is a graded notion and has different stages. These graded

axioms vary with regard to different individuals, ranging from believers to unbelievers inclusive, and even in regard to the levels of faith. Some of its levels are ordinary obligatory deeds, others are emphasized obligatory works and others are ordinary recommended acts and others emphasized recommended works. At times, some of .these levels are so accurate that their imagination is impossible for ordinary people

The Stages Of Negligence

The first stage of procrastination is seeking ease and complacency with regard to worldly affairs, which results in man putting off his works. This bad habit is not related to belief; it is also possible for an unbeliever to be afflicted by it in the same way that a believer does, because unbelievers too sometimes get lazy and negligent as regards their worldly affairs. This bad trait and disposition, which causes man to put off his .duties, is considered as an undesirable habit both by the believer and the unbeliever

Of course, this quality is uglier for a believing man

p: ٣٣

because if he gets used to putting off his obligations for later, bit by bit this quality becomes his permanent disposition of mind and spreads by contagion to his religious obligations too, resulting in his not performing divine obligations on time. That is the reason why it has been said that if a man were lazy in his worldly affairs, this quality gradually becomes his permanent trait of mind giving rise to carelessness and .negligence being extended to matters of the hereafter

The second stage of procrastination is laziness in performing religious obligations and duties. This indolence, based on the three divisions of obligatory duties, is also divided :into three sections

١ . Laziness and carelessness at performing long and time-consuming obligatory deeds, like the five daily prayers, every one of which has its own specified long time. Some people are lazy and torpid at performing these kinds of prayers, and always put them off to be performed at the last moments. Even if this kind of indolence and carelessness is not haram (prohibited by Islamic laws), it is still considered as an

.indecent act

Laziness at performing obligatory actions that ought to be done with immediacy, .۲ even if their urgency is not absolute, in the sense that if they are not discharged at the first opportunity, they have to be fulfilled with urgency at the second opportunity and likewise if they have not been performed at the second opportunity, they have to be ,discharged at the other opportunities; like repentance

whose incumbency is obligatory at the first opportunity and whose putting off is forbidden [haram] by Islamic law but it does not imply that its incumbency is nullified if .procrastinated

Laziness and heedlessness with regard to discharging limited-time obligatory . ۳ works, like fasting, which ought to be done within a restricted and limited time. Some people procrastinate at discharging these responsibilities within their specified time and tell themselves that they will make up for them later in the form of qada' (belated religious obligations performed outside their prescribed time). Even though the sin committed by such an individual is less than that of a man whose decision is not to make up at all for belated divine duties, nonetheless this action is haram (forbidden by .(Islamic law

Asceticism And Wrong Interpretations

The other point worthy of mentioning is that matters have been mentioned in a lot of verses of the Glorious Qur'an and the hadiths which might have different and sometimes conflicting interpretations, and their explication calls for perfect expertise and professional knowledge in religious sciences for the reason that in such circumstances the possibility of error and the likelihood of inadmissible .understandings is high

For example, there are verses of the Glorious Qur'an and the hadiths that have been quoted whose apparent purport is rebuking, praising or retreating from the world, and whose interpretations vary and sometimes oppose each other. One of those

interpretations is the Sufi version which is arrived at without paying attention to the other aspects of Islam and the explicit

religious sciences. In the Sufi point of view, man has to retreat from this world's life and engage in worship in solitude far from the society and/or have companionship with animals, regardless that this kind of inference is in direct contradiction to the verses of the Glorious Qur'an, the hadiths and the categorical primary principles of .religion

If self-reclusion were the primacy of religion, then what fate will befall religious social obligations such as spending money and wealth in Allah's cause, fighting against oppression, enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, and striving for the establishment of an Islamic government, which are among the explicit essentials of Islam!? And where, apart from in the society, are they supposed to be fulfilled? Can these responsibilities be discharged in privacy and seclusion? It is for this reason that deduction of religious principles calls for expertise in the whole collection of religious .sciences and it demands attention to all the aspects and dimensions of religion

In response to this misconception, it ought to be said that seeking the world is reprehensible if it is perceived as the ultimate goal of life. But if the world becomes a means of attaining the perfection of the hereafter, not only is it irreprehensible, but praiseworthy and commendable as well. Conceiving the world as a means of attaining the hereafter has itself levels, some of which are necessary and some of which are .considered as part of human perfections

The utmost limit of seeking the world is

that deriving benefit from the pleasures of the world and engaging in material issues ought not to lead a human being to quitting the divine obligatory works and committing forbidden actions. Seeking the world is forbidden by Islamic law [haram] if

it leads to committing sins and quitting obligatory [wajib] deeds and if this materialism becomes firm as a bad habit and permanent trait of the mind, fighting against it .[becomes incumbent [wajib

From the Islamic point of view, an exemplary man is a person who does not believe in the primacy of the world and does not perform worldly actions, even the permissible ones, for attaining materialistic pleasures. Insightful and perceptive people have attained this stage, which is the highest human achievement; that is to say, they conduct themselves in such a way that all their deeds and behavior, even their breathing, are considered as acts of devotion to Allah. All their physical actions and conduct, such as their eating, physical exercise, and even the permissible coital gratifications, are prerequisites for matters of the hereafter and it is for this reason .[that they are considered as either obligatory [wajib] or recommendable [mustahabb

Asceticism and belief in the primacy of the hereafter

For every reason, believing or not believing in the primacy of the hereafter is delicate and intricate and its criterion of sincerity cannot be based on man's word, but is dependent on the inner intentions of individuals: for instance, if man eats food in order to derive pleasure, he has believed in the primacy of materialism even

if he denies that by word of mouth, and if his intention is to thank Allah by means of deriving gratification from the taste of the food, he has believed in the primacy of the .hereafter because his aim is thanksgiving to Allah

It is for this reason that in the Glorious Qur'an, after mentioning a part of Allah's favors, thanksgiving to Him has been referred to as an aim of making use of His graces. For that reason, the goal is thanksgiving [to Allah] and this occurs when all of man's physical actions acquire a divine color. Most people do not pay attention to the spiritual aspect of their lives and have gotten so attached to physical gratification that they cannot have any other goal than materials and physical satisfaction. There is no doubt that man needs a mentor in order to procure spiritual states because it is likely

.for him to stray from the limits of moderation and get propelled towards extremism

People who want to traverse the course of spiritual perfection and its edification ought to make the pre-eminence and superiority of heavenly pleasures become embedded in their minds in order to weaken their worldly inclinations and reduce their materialistic pleasure seeking. In order to overlook worldly pleasures, they have to inculcate in themselves the conviction that material gratifications are nothing and .valueless in comparison to heavenly pleasures

It is for this reason that in their statements, the Noble Prophet (S) and the Pure and Infallible Imams

p: ٣٨

a) seek to lead people towards giving preference to the hereafter and to encourage‘) them to forgo the world and entirely free themselves from nature because if man considers the world as a precondition for the hereafter, not only is he not a materialist, but also a seeker of paradise. All too often availing oneself of permissible pleasures is itself a prerequisite of not committing forbidden actions [or seeking forbidden pleasures], and it is for this reason that they are considered as acts of worship. In addition to this, availing oneself of permissible pleasures results in .spiritual growth and preparedness for discharging higher obligations

,In regard to dividing daily hours, Imam Musa ibn Ja‘far, (‘a) states

Also set aside one hour for the purpose of deriving benefit from permissible“ pleasures, because it is by deriving benefit from what is halal (permissible) that you ”.can have the vigor to perform the rest of the duties

As we have already been reminded, the Noble Prophet (S) has alluded to this truth that the cause for procrastination is man’s dreams of achieving pleasure; that is to say, man is always trying to attain his worldly pleasures and this in itself motivates him to put his obligations off. In other words, the issue revolves around whether he uses opportunities to attain transient physical pleasures or to achieve perpetual

heavenly pleasures, but because he sees the world readily available and accessible, he expends his time and efforts trying to bring it to hand; in reality

p: ۳۹

man has more faith in the world than he has belief in the hereafter and he prefers the transient and short-lived gratifications to the imperishable pleasures of the eternal paradise. It is surprising that most of us are afflicted by a degree of polytheism because we have no faith in the superiority of the hereafter over the world:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللهِ اِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

"And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others (with Him)."(۱)

Man is polytheistic once he performs an action for other than Allah, even if it is for attaining the reward of the hereafter. In pure monotheism, there is no other goal save Allah; even fear of hell and eagerness for paradise are not ultimate aims in pure monotheism, as Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"O my Lord! I do not worship Thee because of fear of hell and/or because of craving for paradise, but because you are worthy of my devoted adoration."(۲)

Protracted hopes endanger man's prosperity, and it is for this reason that Imam 'Ali's ('a) biggest dread was in case people should get afflicted by prolonged hopes and sacrifice divine duties for their own desires:

"I fear two things greatly; the first thing is pursuing vain passions and desires of the soul and the other thing is protracted hopes, because chasing sensual desires results in forgetting the hereafter."(۳)

Discharging Religious Duties And Obligations Promptly

In continuation of his advice with regard to abstaining from procrastination, the Noble Prophet (S) states,

"Because you only have today and tomorrow is not yours."

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.Surat Yusuf ۱۲:۱۰۶ -۱

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۱, p. ۱۴ -۲

.Ibid., vol. ۷۷, p. ۴۱۹ -۳

Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr not to put off today's obligations until tomorrow, for the reason that none can be certain about tomorrow's coming, and assuming that tomorrow does come, there will still be other responsibilities to be discharged on that day. When you fulfill your duties today, you will have no regret if tomorrow never comes, but once you put off your obligations until tomorrow and it occurs that tomorrow never comes, you will carry this regret and contrition to the next world with .you

Therefore, one ought to think about this very moment and make the most of the present life and abstain from procrastination and putting obligations off in the hope of discharging them another day. When studying and doing research, we ought not to tell ourselves that time is plentiful and we will study tomorrow, because we will have :other responsibilities in the future

If you had a tomorrow, keep discharging your duties just like today, and if tomorrow" ".never comes, you will not be remorseful about your today's negligence

It is possible for an individual to feel contrition for not being successful at performing more responsibilities in spite of having fulfilled his daily duties, but he no longer feels remorseful when he takes the limitations of man's ability into consideration and pays heed to the fact that he has discharged his obligations to the utmost extent of his .ability

To complete the previous issues and to emphasize the point that one ought not to sit idly waiting

:for tomorrow, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! How so many a people there are who wake up in the morning but do“ not see the sun go down, and what a great number of human beings there are waiting ”.for tomorrow but will not see it

Notice and observe how the Noble Prophet (S) prepares the mind of the listener so that he may make the most of the moments of his life. In the beginning, he urges the listener to think about the extent to which man can be optimistic about tomorrow for .him to put off his responsibilities until then

If he has no confidence in his tomorrow coming, why does he put his obligations off until then? When the time for the afternoon prayers arrives, what makes him so sure that he will remain alive for another hour so as to delay his prayers? It is self-evident that if he recites his prayers on time, he will not be regretful later and he can even .better manage to perform his other responsibilities

The Thought Of Death Terminates Protracted Hopes

O Abu Dharr! If you contemplate about the hour of death and perceive with what“ ”.speed it is coming, you will hate its deception and snare

The best way to fight prolonged hopes and their deception is to think about death and to know that the hour of death frustrates protracted dreams and takes man :hopelessly to the other world, as Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

And he who has fallen in love with the world), then it)“

fills his heart with grief which keeps alternating in the black part of his heart, some grief worrying him and another giving him pain. This goes on till the suffocation of (death overtakes him. He is flung dead in the open while his life veins are severed.”(۱

:Again, Imam 'Ali ('a) states elsewhere

As for (one) of its lessons, a man reaches near realization of his desires when ... "suddenly the approach of his death cuts them; then neither is the desire achieved nor (the desire spared..."(۲)

The Intermediary Role Of The World

:Further on in the hadith, the Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Live like either a stranger or a passer-by in this world and consider" ".yourself as a dead human being

The Noble Prophet (S) recommends that in the world man ought to be like a stranger who enters a town and he must observe how one who has no friends and acquaintances lives. With regard to his not being able to gain fondness with anyone, can such a man engage in feasting and entertainment? The believer's true abode is the hereafter, and he is like a way-farer and passer-by in this world. Therefore, he does not intend to spread facilities around himself and embark upon feasting, drinking and entertainment. By the same token, the Noble Prophet (S) advises that man ought to be in the world like a traveler who does not [even] have the opportunity to stop and .rest

It is likely that attention to the apparent purports of such statements would lead man to misinterpretation and

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۲۵۶, wisdom [hikmat] ۳۵۹, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱
.Ibid., p. ۳۵۳, sermon [khutbah] ۱۱۳ -۲

most probably lead him to thinking about secluding himself from the rest of the people and abandon thinking about procuring a house and starting a family and finally [lead him into] abstaining from the blessings and graces of this world and steer him to only reflecting upon the hereafter because that is man's eternal abode! Beyond the

shadow of doubt, such an understanding is not compatible with the basic principles of Islam. All too often, it is likely that acquiring friends and companions, founding a household, saving wealth and buying a house et cetera et cetera all pivot on the hereafter and at the same time it occurs that love for this world is not man's motive, rather his incentive is paying heed to the hereafter and devotion to Allah, because by means of the world and utilizing its facilities and pleasures, man can attain heavenly .perfections and gain nearness to Allah

In reality, an individual who has designated the hereafter as his goal has set the world as a means of attaining the hereafter. Now if a human being cannot [completely] renounce the world and he makes use of it as a means of attaining the hereafter, then at least let him be like a passer-by who rests only to the extent of replenishing his powers. Even if in such an individual's point of view worldly affairs are primary and he cannot dispense with them altogether, at least let him use them to the extent of rejuvenating his abilities

and securing the needs and necessities from the facilities and permissible [pleasures] of this world; as Imam Musa ibn Ja'far ('a), in regard to this issue, has stated that you ought to set aside a part of your day for the purpose of pursuing permissible [halal] .pleasures

The sentence "consider yourself as a dead human being" is the highest expression which the Noble Prophet (S) has employed, but it is likely to be understood wrongly. When the Noble Prophet (S) states that you should count yourself among the dead, the apparent meaning is that in the same way that the dead are deprived of the most basic needs of life such as eating, you too ought to abstain from the world and from seeking its benefits. However, the Prophet's (S) intention is that you should pay .attention to your permanent place of abode

When the life of this world is [viewed as] a stopping-place, and a bridge for crossing over to the ever-lasting world, your attention has to be fixed on your final place of residence and your effort has to be concentrated on preparing yourself and acquiring

enough provisions so as not to become ashamed and apologetic there. For that reason, the Noble Prophet's (S) intention is not that you ought to abstain from earthly affairs altogether and quit thinking about securing livelihood, buying amenities for .yourself and your children's future and their ease

Improper deductions from the verses of the Gracious Qur'an and hadiths have had an old history

among the Muslims; such as when the verse about divine retribution was revealed, some of the Noble Prophet's (S) companions left their homes, abstained from coital relations with their wives, refrained from eating [good] foods and wearing [good] clothes, and [instead only] got busy with worshiping Allah! When news of this reached the Noble Prophet (S), he called them and said, "Why do you act like this? I, who am a Prophet, mix with my wives and derive benefit from the gifts of the world alongside my acts of devotion and fasting. You too ought to imitate me and do not forsake your ".homes and lives

With regard to the previous matters, mentioning this point is necessary that all too often it happens that an individual lives a life of abundance in this world and still does not go under its influence, because he can employ all material matters as a means and way of attaining the truth. By the same token, it ought to be taken into consideration that when this world is castigated, it does not imply that we ought to consider its natural and material gifts as having no value [at all], because they are all .Allah's creations and His divine signs

But criticism is laid on man's point of view and intention; castigation is made when he gets addicted to the world and its gifts and sets them as his main goal and he becomes heedless of their intermediary role. For that reason, the real object of

.castigation is man and his improper way of employing material tools

:In praise of the Noble Prophet (S), Imam 'Ali ('a) says

The Holy Prophet) treated this world disdainfully and regarded it as low. He held it)" contemptible and hated it. He realized that Allah kept it away from him with intention and spread it out for the others by way of contempt. For this reason, he kept away from it of his own volition, banished its recollection from his heart and mind and wished that its recollection should remain hidden from his eye so that he should not (acquire any clothing from it, or hope for staying in it."(١)

O Abu Dharr! When you wake up in the morning do not hope to see the sun set and" ".when you sleep at night do not hope to see the sun rise

Lesson ۴: The Prophet's (S) Recommendation to Make Good Use of Present Abilities

point

Previously, sections of the hadith of Abu Dharr have been the subject of discourse. In those sections, emphasis has been laid on strengthening faith, making the most of opportunities and appreciating life and Allah's graces. Now those same issues will be .repeated so as to have a deeper effect on the hearts of the believers

When man has believed in Allah, the Exalted, the Day of Resurrection and divine values, he desires to be spotless before Allah and be the object of His favor, but this is dependent on him knowing the value of his life and to also know how to put it to use in order

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۲۹۴, sermon [khutbah] ۱۰۸, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

to attain the goal, which is eternal bliss. In continuation, the Prophet (S) warns man against being afflicted by heedlessness, sin and deviation, because it is likely that the hour of death finds him in that state and he gets propelled to the everlasting world [in .[a] guilty and conscience-stricken [state

The Role Of Meditation Upon Death And The Consequences Of Sin

O Abu Dharr! Beware lest your death finds you while in a state of sin in which case no“ opportunity remains for compensation and repentance and for returning to the world, no heirs of yours will extol you for the inheritance you have left them and Allah, the ”.Exalted, will not accept the excuse which you will make

As has been said before this, the Prophet (S) has articulated some of the ethical concepts with different expressions and the aim of repeating these ethical notions is .to produce higher effects on the hearts of the believers

As you will understand after a short review of the verses of the Qur’an, a great deal of verses have been repeated in various instances, and even the exact words have been repeated in some cases, like the blessed verse “Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?” that has been repeated thirty one times in Surat al-Rahman. Even if every verse acquires its own special meaning with every repetition, the role of every repetition in producing more profound effects on the hearts cannot be denied. In our daily actions repetition plays a considerable role in changing behavior and producing either good

.or bad habits

It has been narrated that when the Qur’anic verse, “And enjoin prayer on your followers, and steadily adhere to it; We do not ask you for subsistence, and the (good) end is for guarding against evil;”(۱) was revealed, the Prophet (S) used to go to ‘Ali’s (‘a) house for eight successive months and used to state, “Prayer! Allah’s mercy be upon thee, ‘Allah has willed to drive away uncleanliness from you the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) ”.’and keep you pure

If the Prophet (S) used to go to ‘Ali’s (‘a) once every day, it can be inferred that this) action was repeated two hundred and forty times, despite that this action was (.apparently repeated five times a day

The outcome of the Prophet’s (S) statement is that if man does not know what actions

lead him towards prosperity and which ones lead him to perdition, he gets entangled in sin in the end and if death catches him while committing vice, he has earned the worst losses for his soul and he has lost the gem of life and existence, youth and divine gifts in the way of sin and in return has earned nothing save destruction. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) states that you should fear lest the hour of death comes while you are committing sin and get your soul in that state. In that case, you forever do not have another opportunity to make up for your sins and it will remain

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۱- Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۱۳۲.

available in your record, because no permission will be given to any to return to the world.

With regard to this, the Qur'an states:

حَتّى إِذَا جاءَ اَحَدَهُم الْمَوْتُ قالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ * لَعَلّى اَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيما تَرَكْتُ كَلاَّ اِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا...

"Until when death overtakes one of them, he says: 'Send me back, my Lord, send me back; haply I may do good in that which I have left.' By no means! it is a (mere) word that he speaks; and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised..."(۱)

Man will abstain from sin if at the time of committing vice he thinks about this point that it is likely for the hour of death to arrive while he is in a sinful state. Supposing that man too earns a lot of profit in his illicit businesses and transactions and leaves it as inheritance for his heirs, will it bear him any good? Are they not going to utilize this inheritance for their own pleasure-seeking and forget about him? Even though they were to praise him, what benefit has it got for his condition? On the other hand, he will meet Allah with all his errors and offences. Now, what pretexts has he got to present to Allah? He who knew that what he was doing was prohibited [haram] and is contrary to the orders of Allah and proof had been made complete upon him, what pretexts is he going to present in the presence of

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.Surat al-Mu'minun ۲۳:۹۹-۱۰۰ -۱

?Allah and what response is he going to give to the fire that will be dropped upon him

O Abu Dharr! I have never seen a fire like the fire of Hell, which [even] the sleeping" seek to run away from, and I have never seen [anything] like Heaven, which is desired ".by even the sleeping

The Need For Appreciating Life

O Abu Dharr! Be more miserly with your life than [you are] with your money and" ".wealth

If a person saves money with a lot of difficulty and effort, does he freely place it at the disposal of other people? For the reason that he expended a lot of effort for its acquisition, he does not easily lose it and knows its value. On the contrary, it is likely that without feeling the slightest loss, man spends hours of his life pursuing vanity. In other words, it is likely for one to be mean with his money but not be miserly with his .life despite the fact that the value of life cannot be compared to the value of money

If the life of a person falls in danger, he is ready to spend many times all his belongings in order to save his life. Suppose that all gold, silver and diamond mines were at the disposal of an individual and it is said to him that he ought to give up all his ?life in order to stay alive. Does he not give it up

Man desires worldly facilities for his own use, now of what benefit

are they if he does not stay alive? For this reason, his life has more value than all the wealth of the world. Why then are you losing this precious asset freely? Not only do you lose it freely, but sometimes earn divine wrath in return for it? If losing money in the free air is not a wise action, how then can losing life freely in pursuit of transient

?passions be wise

Do not put this invaluable asset at the free disposal of companion, friend, wife and friends. Do not squander it in vain activities for the sake of pleasing others, worse is that you should waste it on committing transgressions and sins. Yes, if for the good pleasure of Allah man expends his life pleasing others, gladdening his wife and children and his believing brother and/or on alleviating the needs of a believer, not only has he not freely lost his life but has earned the good pleasure of Allah whose value is more than the whole world. But it is not rational to expend life which is worth the whole world for the sake of amusing and entertaining this one and that one, .because in this instance you will have lost it freely

Discharging Duties On Time And Not Being Anxious About The Following Day

O Abu Dharr! Does anyone of you expect something other than wealth which leads to“ disobedience, or poverty which results in forgetting Allah, or sickness which ruins his body or old age which withholds him from activity, or death which arrives hurriedly, or the arrival

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of the seditious imposter, or the approach of the Day of Resurrection which is more ”.dreadful and bitter

These expressions are another emphasis on making the most of opportunities in the direction of discharging obligations. If man does not employ the energy and opportunities that are at his disposal to fulfill his divine duties now, then which opportunities is he waiting for? These sentences are a warning to people who, when it is requested of them to discharge their obligations, respond that there is plenty of .time for fulfilling responsibilities

What day are you waiting for in order to make up for the past and discharge your duties that you remain idle [today] and put off your work until later, or get occupied in pursuing vain activities, or Allah forbid, you get absorbed in sin? For instance, during the period of poverty and want, man waits for the encumbrances of the period of

poverty to be overcome and become rich and then discharge his duties. Despite that may be wealth and needlessness may have worse demands than poverty and lead you to disobedience, because man becomes defiant when he perceives himself .needless

كَلاّ اِنَّ الاِنْسانَ لَيَطْغى، * اَنْ رَآهُ اسْتَغْنى

(Nay! Man is most surely inordinate, because he sees himself free from want.”(١)“

Do you during the period of needlessness and wealth wait for the encumbrances that have been brought about by your money and wealth to be removed and for the period of poverty and want to arrive so as to

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١- Surat al-‘Alaq ۹۶:۶-۷.

discharge your duties? Do you imagine that the loss of your wealth will reduce the encumbrances of your work and life and you can hence discharge your duties with ease? All too often, poverty results in forgetting goals and perfections and occupies all .your time that you forget about perfection and spirituality

When you are healthy you imagine that man remembers Allah more during the period of illness, despite that this has no universality; it is not always true that man gets busy with invocation of Allah, supplication and be taking to the Infallibles (‘a) when he is sick. Sometimes, illness gets so predominant on man that it robs him of the vigor to .discharge acts of devotion

During the age of youth, you tell yourself to let the passion of youthful pride and mischief get quenched and then you will discharge the acts of devotion when old age arrives, negligent of the fact that you will get besieged by the reduction of ability and strength and will not be able to fulfill your duties. Therefore, when do you intend to discharge your obligations? When your death arrives? Or, when the seditious ?imposter comes

The term 'dajjal (the seditious imposter)' denotes the liquid of a goldsmith and is applied to a very deceptive person too, in the same way that the appearance of a lying person is deceptively attractive and entices others to himself by his hypocrisy and dissimulation.

In the hadiths, 'dajjal' denotes wickedness and mischievousness. In any case, the

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Prophet's (S) intention may be one of these two meanings below:

۱. The person who will appear at the end of time and cause sedition and wickedness.

۲. The intention may not be a particular person, but every deceitful and fraudulent person: people who deceive others by means of enhancing their appearances and who attract others to themselves by means of their hypocrisy and dissimulation are instances of the dajjal and people who cause deviations among the people by presenting falsehood as right and right as falsehood.

The dajjal causes truth and falsehood to get so intertwined [with each other] that separating one from the other is impossible. That is why the Prophet (S) emphasizes that until you can distinguish right from falsehood, make the most of the opportunity and act upon what is right and be bound to its demands and needs, lest a day arrives when you will be misled and the way of guidance is closed in front of you; this is the worst occurrence that awaits man, most deplorable and more bitter than everything else is waiting for the Day of Resurrection.

In this saying, the Noble Prophet (S) warns man about the dangers of the future and embodies them for him, and mentions this possibility that it is likely for the problems of the future to be more than those of today; it is therefore fair for man to make the most of his opportunities today, and not play for time.

Lesson ۵: Castigating the Acquisition of Knowledge for Worldly Goals

The Consequences Of Not Acting Upon Knowledge And Attaining Social Rank By Means Of It

(In this section the Prophet (S

has addressed the scholars; His Holiness urges the scholars to conform their actions to their knowledge and reminds them about the ill-effects of not conforming conduct .to knowledge

Even if His Holiness' statements are clear and need no expounding, but for the sake of making this issue more transparent so as to make it clearer in the hearts, we will hint at some of the hadiths whose purport is the same as that of the Noble Prophet's (S) statements. But before that we shall be reminded that from the Islamic point of view a rational man cannot be without responsibilities, but the standards and limitations of obligations differ. Therefore, an ignorant man and a scholar equally have responsibilities, even though the burdens of a scholar are more than those of an .ignorant man

Therefore, for the reason that the ignorant man has obligations too, he is obliged to learn the divine duties and religious issues of his needs and not knowing religious issues does not result in man being divested of religious duties, that is why Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

On the Day of Resurrection, when Allah's slave who did not fulfill his duties [in the" world] is called for questioning, Allah, the Exalted, will ask him, 'Were you aware of your duties and obligations?' If in response he says, 'Yes, I was aware of my duties', Allah will say, 'Why did you not act upon that which you were aware of?' And if the slave says, 'I was an ignorant

man', Allah will say, 'Why did you not go to learn your responsibilities so as to act upon (them..."'(۱

The basic difference between a scholar and an ignorant man is that Allah's divine proof has fully been presented to him and no pretexts will be accepted for his not

discharging his responsibilities, and he will [even] be dealt with in a more strict manner than the ignorant.

With regard to this, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"Seventy sins of an ignorant man will be forgiven before one sin of a scholar is forgiven..."(۲)

It ought not to be imagined that quitting education is better in order not to be worse off than the ignorant, because one who fled from acquiring knowledge and awareness will be asked too [why they did so] and responsibility will not be divested of him because of his taking flight from education. In addition to that, why ought we not to be among those scholars who act upon their knowledge and will get envied in the hereafter in the same way that other people used to envy them in the world?

In our sources of hadith, a great deal of sections with different titles have been recorded with regard to the virtue of acquiring knowledge, to the extent that it has been recorded in some of the hadiths that even the birds of the air and the fish of the sea and the animals of the wilderness all seek Allah's forgiveness for a person who is seeking divine knowledge.

For

۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷, p. ۲۸۵.
۲- Ibid., vol. ۲, p. ۲۷.

every reason His Holiness' sates in this section that a scholar whose actions are not in accord with his knowledge will be in the worst position and rank on the Day of Resurrection and will not smell the sweet scent of paradise. All too often [it occurs that] a person who embarks upon acquisition of knowledge initially does so with the intention of serving the religion and discharging his obligations but encumbrances crop up along the way; However, some people do not have a divine intention and

.objective from the beginning

Not only do they lack sincerity, but have ill-intentions as well, like acquiring knowledge for the sake of attracting other people's attention and respect and acquiring social rank and popularity. It is natural that right from the beginning such an individual is heading towards deviation and collapse and consequently gets entangled in the filth of meanness and misery and will not smell the scent of paradise on the Day of .Resurrection

It is likely that a person who goes to learn secular knowledge for the sake of attaining position, opportunity and the acquisition of daily bread does not get reproached and blamed, but a person who learns divine sciences, which have been designed for the prosperity of the hereafter, for the sake of attaining the world deserves to be castigated. In reality, such an individual believes that the position and status of the world is higher than that of the hereafter. In other words, he has believed in the

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primacy of the world and not that of religion. This thought is a result of lack of faith in the basic principles and values of religion and has no end save being driven away :from Allah, as the Prophet states

A person whose knowledge and awareness have been increased but [he] has not" (become detached from the world has in fact got very far from Allah."(۱

The Consequences Of Acquiring Knowledge For The Sake Of Deceiving Others

O Abu Dharr! A person who acquires knowledge for the sake of deceiving people will" ".not smell the sweet scent of paradise

Some people not only embark upon acquiring knowledge for the sake of attaining fame and position but worse than that, they get education in order to deceive and .mislead people

Up to this section of the hadith, mention has been made about the importance of

harmonizing our actions in accord with our knowledge and purifying the intention: that man ought to conceive of what intention he has when he embarks upon the acquisition of knowledge and should not let evil intentions appear in his heart. He ought not to set out gathering knowledge for the sake of titles such as 'Hujjat al-Islam', 'Ayatullah', 'Philosopher' [filsuf] and 'Interpreter of the Qur'an' [mufassir] and .[attracting the people's respect [and attention

Maybe people who take the trouble of getting education for the sake of attaining fame imagine that every person who is more popular among the people is more beloved by Allah too. This illusion is vain and void. Has every one who is popular among the people

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.Ibid., p. ۳۷ -۱

discharged his responsibilities in order for him to be beloved by Allah and [thus] attain prosperity? Even if he is very popular among the people, he is still the most ashamed and disgraced of all people in the sight of Allah because the criteria of man's works are knowledge, action and piety. The standard of judgment is that man ought to be .beloved by Allah, not by the people

Admitting Ignorance is a Quality of the Divine Scholars

:In a hadith, the Prophet (S) states

Every person who learns divine knowledge, which is supposed to be learnt only for" [the good pleasure of] Allah, for attaining worldly goals and position will not smell the (sweet scent of paradise on the Day of Resurrection."(۱

O Abu Dharr! Whenever they ask you about something which you do not know, say" that you do not know so as to remain safe and do not pronounce an edict over what you have no knowledge of in order to escape Allah's wrath on the Day of Resurrection. (It is not permissible for man to say that of which he has no knowledge, ".(all too often, that word becomes a cause of deviation

One of the greatest misfortunes which a scholarly man may be afflicted by is feeling ashamed to admit his ignorance when he does not know something. This confession is very easy for an ignorant man, but man evades saying “I do not know” when he is known as an academic. When they ask him something that he does not know, it is hard for him

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.Ibid., p. ۳۸ -۱

to let the question go unanswered because he fears lest the people speculate about the authenticity of his scholarly credentials if he does not know the answer to .questions

What wrong is there with saying that I do not know in response to the people’s questions? Has it been made incumbent upon the people to know everything? Only Allah knows everything and the others have only used a drop of His knowledge, as :has been stated in the Qur’an

... وَمَا أُوتِيتُم مِن الْعِلْمِ الاَّ قَلِيلاً

(and you are not given out of knowledge but a little.”(۱ ...“

The late ‘Allamah Tabataba’i, may Allah be pleased with him, used to hold class sessions on Thursday and Friday nights which were attended by a number of his students and philosophical and non-philosophical discussions were held. If we had any questions to ask, we used to present them before the class session or along the way [when going back home after class]. One night along the way I asked him a philosophical question. He answered, “I do not know.” I asked a second question, to which he easily replied that he did not know, then after a moment’s reflection, said, “Can a response be presented in this form?” Then, he propounded an agreeable and satisfying answer. That night, he stated, “We ought to compare the things unknown to us with the things known to Allah. It is in that case that we will perceive that we do not know anything and the things unknown

.Surat al-Isra’ (or Bani Isra’il) ۱۷:۸۵ -۱

”.to us are like the known to Allah, endless

This is the way of those who have been trained in the school of thought of the Prophets (‘a) and the saints [awliya’] of Allah, that if they were not certain about anything, they gave a doubtful response. All too often, the answers he used to give us were more convincing than the ones we had, but if he was not certain and fully convinced, he was bound to initially say, “I do not know.” In reality, this way had been .attained as a result of fighting against the carnal soul and subduing it

This is the method of people who have spent sixty or seventy years of their blessed lives along the course of purification of the soul, teaching and learning. In any case, after we have learnt [only] a few words and expressions, it is hard for us to say that we do not know when we return to our cities. We ought to practice and accustom ourselves to easily admitting ignorance when we do not know something, and if we have doubts, to say that what we are offering is a possible response. In this case, we .will have freed ourselves from the troubles of the hereafter

Man’s Biggest Regret On The Day Of Resurrection

O Abu Dharr! A group of the dwellers of heaven will glance [down] upon the inmates“ of the fire and ask them, ‘What made you enter hell? Despite that we entered heaven ’.as a result of your teaching and training us

In response, they will say, ‘We enjoined others to perform good works but we ”.’ourselves did not do what we advised others to do

One of the scenes which has been described in the Qur’an is that the dwellers of heaven are at a higher level above the inmates of the infernal hell fire and see them and talk to them, as if paradise is situated at an elevated place and hell is positioned

.at a low place, and that is why the dwellers of the Garden are at a higher level

The Qur’an’s expression is that sometimes the dwellers of heaven address the dwellers of hell and sometimes the dwellers of hell address the dwellers of paradise:

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّهِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا قَالُوا نَعَمْ فَأَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ أَن لَعْنَهُ اللهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ

“And the dwellers of the garden will call out to the inmates of the fire, ‘Surely we have found what our Lord promised us to be true; have you found what your Lord promised to be true?’ They will say, ‘Yes.’ Then a crier will cry out among them that the curse of Allah is on the unjust.” (۱)

Yes, as has been recorded in the hadith, the dwellers of hell will address a group of the inmates of the Fire saying, “We attained paradise thanks to the guidance, teaching and training which you gave us, what happened to you that you got caught up in Allah’s retribution?”

p: ۶۳

۱- Surat al-A‘raf ۷:۴۴.

They will respond with regret and remorse, saying, “We did not discharge what we enjoined others to do, we invited you to perform good works but we ourselves did not do what we said. We advised you to fulfill the recommendable works, but we ourselves did not execute them. We guided you away from sin and gossip, but we ourselves got contaminated by sin and gossip. You listened to our words and executed them and earned a place in that lofty abode, but we got entangled in this miserable and painful fate in spite of all our knowledge.”

This remorse and contrition is the destiny of people who did not discharge their obligations. This regret is certainly more painful than burning in divine retribution, because spiritual torture is more painful than physical torture. The pain of rejoicing at an enemy’s failure is more than that of physical torture and burning.

It is painful for man to feel that others found their way to the garden of bliss as a result of his guidance and he got into the predicament of hell despite the fact that he could have attained higher heights by means of his knowledge, and his disciples sit [in heaven] watching him. They are enjoying the pleasures and comforts of the Garden and he is being tormented in the Fire. If he did not have any torment, besides being deprived of the blessings that are at the disposal of his followers, this would be .enough for him

With due attention

to the points which have been mentioned in this noble hadith, we have to initially correct our intention and embark upon the acquisition of knowledge for [the good pleasure of] Allah and discharging our responsibilities and execute what we say right from the outset so as to make this habit firm in ourselves and be able to discharge our duties as we acquire more information. If at the outset we build the foundation upon laziness and heedlessness, we initially quit discharging a work and later on another duty until the habit of disobedience gets strengthened in us and fighting against the .carnal soul is going to be hard later on

(The Categories Of Scholars In The Words Of 'Ali ('a

Scholars are of two kinds; the first kind is the scholar whose actions match his" .knowledge and he becomes prosperous

The second type is the academic whose works do not correspond with his knowledge" and he falls into perdition and without doubt the dwellers of hell will be bothered by the bad smell of a scholar without good deeds. Verily, the most regretful and remorseful of the people of hell is the person who calls another one towards Allah and the other one accepts the invitation and obeys Allah and thereafter Allah makes him enter paradise, while the caller [himself] is taken to the eternal Fire because of not (doing what he said [acting upon his knowledge]."(١

:(In an inspired hadith, Allah addresses Prophet David ('a

The least punishment which I inflict on a scholar without works (good deeds) is" harder than seventy

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲, p. ۳۴ -۱

punishments or requitals, and that is getting the sweetness of supplication away from (him (and after that he does not derive pleasure from remembrance of me)..."(۱

Lesson ۶: The Magnificence and Magnitude of the Rights of Allah's Blessings and the Need for Attention to Obligations

The Greatness Of The Rights Of Allah And The Infiniteness Of His Blessings

O Abu Dharr! Allah's rights are higher than people could manage to discharge and his" gifts are more than can be counted by His slaves, but you ought to acknowledge your ".faults every morning and every evening when you offer repentance

In this section, the discussion pivots on bringing a sense of responsibility and performing duties. After man has understood that he ought to make use of his life, and knew that for the purpose of deriving optimum benefit from his life, time, and leisure, he ought to be knowledgeable; the turn comes for inducing a sense of motivation and activity in an individual and understanding how this motivation arises in man. In order to bring about ambition, it is necessary to pay attention to this point that Allah has rights upon His slaves and for this reason man finds himself obligated to Allah. Man conceives with his intellect and natural disposition that if someone had a right on him, he ought to honor that right and every intelligent man knows that Allah, .the Exalted, has the highest right upon him

Once man has realized that all the gifts which he enjoys, ranging from the origin of existence and life to the rest of the gifts, material and spiritual, are all from Allah, the Exalted, it is not possible for him to forget his

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.Ibid., p. ۳۲ -۱

devotional duties. He knows that he ought to be thankful and appreciative to the Provider of these graces and this in itself is an incentive which drives a believer to action. That is the reason why in the first sentence of this section of the hadith the Prophet (S) hints at the rights of Allah on mankind and states that man can never ever manage to thank Allah and discharge divine rights fully.

Once man has understood that by expending all his life, he still remains unsuccessful at performing divine rights and thanking Allah for His blessings, he always ought to perceive himself as indebted, even if he has not committed any sin, divine rights are incumbent upon him and he ought to fulfill them, lest the devil deceive him into imagining that he has a claim on Allah. If man, with the grace of Allah, were successful at fulfilling his obligations, he ought not pride himself and boastfully thank Allah that he does not commit sin! He gets afflicted by heedlessness and self-admiration. Therefore, it has to be known that man cannot manage to discharge Allah's rights and thank Him for His graces, as Allah states:

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَهَ اللهِ لاَ تُحْصُوهَا...

"And if you would count the blessings of Allah's favors, you will not be able to number them..."(۱)

Supposing that man were able to count Allah's favors, he would still not be able to discharge the right of any one of them. Even if he were to content himself

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.Surat al-Nahl ۱۶:۱۷ -۱

with saying one 'Praise be to Allah', he still has not discharged the right of thanking Allah for it because just saying 'Praise be to Allah' is a grace and favor that Allah has granted unto him, and itself stands in need of thanksgiving. Therefore, for every thanksgiving, there is [yet] another incumbent thanksgiving. That is to say, if we were

to [repeatedly] say 'Thanks be to Allah' up to the Day of Resurrection, we still would not have discharged the right of one 'Praise be to Allah', therefore, how can we be ?able to fulfill the rights of all these graces which creatures are not able to count

Attention to this point that the graces of Allah are uncountable and He has a lot of rights upon man inspires a feeling of modesty and humility in man who still feels .indebted to Allah even if he has not perpetrated any sin

Therefore, if man cannot fulfill all the thanksgiving for Allah's graces and discharge His rights, the greatest work he can do is to preserve the condition of repentance and quitting the small sins, humble submissiveness to Allah and acknowledging sin and dereliction of duty. This in itself withholds man from pride and delusion, because when man gets deviated from the correct path, he gets stricken by materialism, complacency and self-indulgence, and when he gets guided to the correct path and performance of duties for the first time, he gets afflicted by pride and egotism. He compares himself with

p: ۶۸

the others and tells himself that people do not know the value of Allah's favors and are contaminated by sin, but we have been successful at discharging [divine] duties !and appreciating blessings

Therefore, despite that we ought to be responsible and practical people with regard to our duties, we ought not to be stricken by pride; this is the greatest lesson of .(edification of character that can be deduced from the words of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a

In this same section, the Noble Prophet (S) besides encouraging work and effort and discharging of abilities and perceiving the importance of the rights of Allah, he warns .against being afflicted by pride and self-admiration

The Shortness Of Life And The Immortality Of Good And Bad Works

point

O Abu Dharr! In the passing of the day and night, you have a life that is always“ heading towards diminution, and your works remain preserved and suddenly death arrives and in that case every person who performs good works will reap good results and every person who does a bad work will harvest regret and every farmer reaps ”.what he sows

One point which impels man to work and make effort and brings to appearance the incentive to be active and perform duties is attention to this point that life is in the process of being spent. Whether we like it or not, our life gets decreased with every breath we take and we cannot manage to bring the wheel of time to a halt and seconds cannot be turned back and in the words of ‘Ali ibn

p: ۶۹

:(Abi Talib (‘a

(Every breath man takes is a step towards death.”(۱“

We ought to be careful not to lose this capital freely, a capital that is always decreasing and wearing out, until death arrives and there is no running away from it, :as Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

A person who fears death does not escape it and he who loves to stay alive ... “ (forever will not live forever.”(۲

The only way of preventing the loss of life is a profitable transaction and what better transaction than that man should build his heaven by means of his life, because that is :the only capital which can purchase the value of life, as Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states

Is there no free man who can leave this chewed morsel (of the world) to those who“ like it? Certainly, the only price for yourselves is paradise. Therefore, do not sell (yourself except for paradise.”(۳

Therefore, what losers are people who bargain their great [and] priceless asset of life with the fire of Allah’s wrath! Perhaps those who expend their lives in pursuing vanity

imagine that with the passage of life, their works also vanish. What void imagination! Even if this inebriety is a transitory and passing intoxication, and [it is] the inebriety of the Day of Resurrection which is everlasting; but still man's works remain conserved because works have a connection with man's soul and Allah, the Exalted. Even though we live in an inebriety which is heading towards diminution, but still we have a relationship with the

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ١١١٧, wisdom [hikmat] ٧١, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١
.Ibid., p. ١٢٢, sermon [khutbah] ٣٨ -٢
.Nahj al-Balaghah, wisdom [hikmat] ۴۶۵ -٣

.eternal world and our works will be stored there

a) The embodiment of man's worldly works on the Day of Resurrection

One of the acknowledged principles in regard to the Day of Resurrection is the preservation and embodiment of deeds, which has been hinted at by Allah in the :Qur'an; amongst which is

وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا مَالِ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا وَوَجَدُوا ما عَمِلُوا حاضِرًا وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا

And the Book shall be placed, then you will see the guilty fearing from what is in it," and they will say, 'Ah! Woe to us! What a book this is! It does not omit a small one nor a great one, but numbers them all;' and what they had done they shall find present (there; and your Lord does not deal unjustly with anyone."(١

:At another juncture it states

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ * يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

So he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it. And he who has done an" (atom's weight of evil shall see it."(٢

b) The Suddenness of Death is A Cause of Vigilance and Wakefulness

No man knows up to when he is going to remain alive and when his hour of death arrives, as the Qur'an states:

... وَمَا تَدْرِى نَفْسٌ مَا ذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِى نَفْسٌ بِأَىِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ...

"... And no one knows what he shall earn on the morrow; and no one knows in what land he shall die..."(۳)

One of Allah's graces is that no man knows the time of his death, because if we knew when our

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۱- Surat al-Kahf ۱۸:۴۹.

۲- Surat al-Zilzal ۹۹:۷-۸.

۳- Surat Luqman ۳۱:۳۴.

hour of death arrives, we would get more afflicted by pride and egoism. Of course, knowing or not knowing the time of death makes no difference for those [people] who have high spiritual capacities and are always reflecting about discharging responsibilities.

It is possible for Allah to announce to them when their hour of death arrives, although it is far from wisdom for Allah to announce the hour of death to us for whom knowing the hour of death would result in more procrastination and [our] putting off duties. Divine wisdom necessitates that we always ought to be concerned that perhaps the hour of death will arrive [just] one moment later and it is in this instance that we can make better use of our lives.

The Pre-Ordination Of Man's Sustenance And Its Inaccessibility To Others

"O Abu Dharr! The position of one who does not hurry will not be taken away by another man and the covetous greedy person will not attain what has not been ordained for him."

Man is confronted by two great calamities in life; the first is that life compels him to pursue his needs and wants, as a result of which he is stopped from fulfilling his duties, and the second is that when he succeeds at discharging divine duties, he gets afflicted by pride and self-admiration which is a fire that exterminates (good) works. A .way of preventing these calamities has to be thought out

Some people imagine that discharging their obligations impedes on their lives. They imagine that getting busy with the world is

p: ٧٢

a need which cannot be avoided and this in itself is a hurdle for performing divine and religious responsibilities; these excuses and pretexts are the devil's temptations. What eliminates these temptations is attention to this point that Allah, the Exalted, has predestined a determined subsistence for every person and no matter how hard .man strives, he will not attain more than what has been ordained for him

One of the doctrines which has been mentioned in the Book and the Prophet's (S) sayings and paying attention to it is incumbent upon man is the issue of the pre-ordination of sustenance and we currently intend to explicate the notion of the pre-ordination of sustenance and that man is not responsible for his subsistence, whether he strives or not. We will briefly mention that in religious sciences, importance has .been accorded to this issue

In a lot of instances in "Nahj al-Balaghah" mention has been made of the subject of the pre-ordination of sustenance. It has been mentioned in this very hadith that if man is lazy at acquiring his sustenance, another person consumes his subsistence and if a person has a lot of greed at collecting possessions and strives very hard to acquire a greater share for himself, he will not attain what has not been ordained. .Therefore, attention to this point forestalls the devil's temptations

When the devil intends to stop man from discharging his divine duties and seduces him to currently be pursuing bread and water (daily sustenance), he ought

to hit the devil's mouth and say, "Keep quiet! My sustenance is preordained and will not be allotted to someone else." Of course, this belief is attained when man has perfect certitude about the preordination of sustenance by Allah, the Exalted.

What has been said about Allah, pre-ordaining the sustenance of individuals, does not imply that man ought to stop striving for his daily sustenance and say that Allah will grant him his sustenance. It has been discussed in its proper place that man ought to strive to alleviate his needs and Allah is disgusted by lazy and self-indulgent people.

The discourse about the preordination of sustenance is for people who get seduced by the deceptions and temptations of the devil, they imagine that if they strive to discharge divine duties, they along with their wives and children will die of hunger. Allah is greater than that he should leave hungry a person who is trudging the course of devotion.

The Unity Of Divine Actions And The Source Of Allah's Beneficence

The Unity Of Divine Actions [Tawhid-i Af'ali] And The Source Of Allah's Beneficence

"Every person who attains good has been granted it by Allah and every person who remains safe from harm has been protected by Allah."

Another point worth mentioning is that once we get successful at discharging divine duties, performing acts of worship and fleeing from sins, we ought not to imagine that we are very worthy people because Allah is the origin of every good work which is performed by us. It is He who grants us the favor to

perform good works and to keep aloof from sin.

Whatever worldly good naturally comes to us with or without effort is from Allah and also it is Allah who wards calamities off. The root of this conviction and perception manifests itself in belief in the unity of divine actions [tawhid-i af'ali] that man ought to

perceive all good and good works as coming from Allah and also know Him as the .Repellant of vices and evil

The discussion about the unity of divine actions enjoys great importance and it can be said that all the issues about divine decree and pre-destination [qada wa qadar] and the like have been said themselves to be prerequisites for man's belief in the unity of .divine actions

The benefit of paying due attention to the unity of divine actions is that pride, self-admiration and egotism get erased from the inside of man and in reality attention to the unity of divine actions is a cure for a lot of ethical vices; amongst them laziness, indolence, jealousy and a feeling of inferiority. With attention to the unity of divine actions, no ground remains for jealousy and no ground remains for either pride or .lowliness. When man sees himself in connection with Allah, he does not feel inferior

Likewise, a person who perceives Allah's greatness does not feel egoistic because he believes everything as coming from Allah. Likewise, if man were to believe that all powers come from Allah and man cannot advance in his work save with

Allah's permission, he does not fear any one. Once he has believed that Allah is the Source of all good and no one attains good without His permission, he no longer puts .his hope in other than Allah and only trusts in Allah

Lesson ۷: The Vigilance and Alertness of a Believer

Companionship with the Pious and Religious Scholars, and the Difference of Sin in the Perception of a Believer and an Infidel

O Abu Dharr! The pious are honorable and the religious scholars are the guides." Companionship with them results in the increase of knowledge and virtue. A believer perceives his sin as a frightful cliff which he fears will come down crumbling upon him ".while the infidel conceives his sin as a fly which passes across his nose

In the previous statements, the Prophet (S) has informed man about his sensitive

circumstances, the value of his life and the importance of the moments of his life and has cautioned him against laziness, idleness and indifference and [counseled him] to consider the issues of life with a sense of responsibility. It has been emphasized that man ought to make use of opportunities and not put off today's work until tomorrow. Now the question arises as to what is the best way of utilizing our lives and what is the ?first step on the spiritual journey towards Allah

Incontrovertibly, the first step towards appreciating life and spiritual way-faring is abstinence from sin, for the reason that man who is contaminated by sin cannot attain .any success and the value of man's life lies in his not being tainted by sin

,For this reason sin, no matter how small it is

p: ٧۶

is a cause of destruction, even if man performs a lot of worship alongside it. A person who sins alongside his acts of worship is similar to a person who has a torn bag and no matter how much money he puts in it, it comes out falling through the hole. Or, he is like a person who harvests his produce and then afterwards sets it on fire!? Because .sins are like fire that is tossed on our works

Therefore, the first stride to take is to know sins and to avoid them and to repent once we commit transgressions and seek Allah's help and that of His saints [awliya'] so as .to be successful at not being contaminated by sin

The Need For Choosing A Worthy Friend And Perceiving Sin As Great

In the Prophet's (S) point of view, a man trudging the course towards perfection needs two things: one is a worthy friend and the other is conceiving sin as great and keeping himself aloof from it. Perhaps the medium between these two implies that selecting a good friend is a prerequisite for perceiving sin as big and finally escaping from sin; and choosing a bad friend is a requisite for getting even more polluted by sin, because a good friend can be a source of a lot of graces and favors in the same .way that a bad friend is a cause of a great deal of aberrations and deviations

A good friend motivates man to conceive sin as great and to always consider himself as ashamed and remorseful

p: ۷۷

in the sight of Allah. Similarly, an immoral friend perpetually encourages man to perceive transgression as small; to such an extent that he does not feel ashamed of .any sin

:In this section, the Prophet (S) presents two criteria for selecting an associate

.Having piety .۱

Awareness of the divine permissible things and the forbidden ones, in other words, .۲ .knowledge of the religion

Companionship with an impious friend makes man perceive sin as light and as a result of which he earns eternal perdition and loss; as the Qur'an quotes some of the :inmates of hell saying

يَا وَيْلَتَنِى لَيْتَنِى لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا * لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِى عَنْ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَائَنِى وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ للإِنْسَانِ خَذُولاً

O woe is me! Would that I had not taken such a one for a friend! Certainly he led me" (astray from the reminder after it had come to me; and Satan fails to aid man."(۱

In the same way that an impious friend is not worthy of making friendship with, no plans for friendship have to be made with an ignorant person. Even if he intends to .perform a good deed, he falls into error and deviation as a result of ignorance

Therefore, in the same way that awareness and piety are two wings for traversing the course of spiritual perfection and growth along the path of right, they are also two good standards for selecting a companion. It is for this reason that in his recommendation to Abu Dharr, the Noble Prophet (S) presents piety and

p: ۷۸

۱- ۲۵:۲۸-۲۹ Surat al-Furqan.

religious scholarship as two criteria for choosing an associate. Of course, it is proper that these two qualities are combined in man, because man who intends to perform his duties without being aware of his religion gets deceived by the Devil and the people, no matter how holy he might be.

The Danger Of Unrestrained Scholars And Unwise And Foolish Ignorant People

In a well-known hadith, the Prophet (S) states:

"Two groups broke my back; a religious scholar who is unrestrained in performing indecent deeds and a devoted worshiper who is ignorant and uninformed."(۱)

Imam Khomeini ('a) used to state that sanctimonious people succeed at discharging their devotional obligations but ignore their original duty, which is acquiring knowledge. They travel the course with those same aberrant inclinations of theirs and even insist and persist on it. The damage inflicted upon Islam by these people is more than the damage inflicted by libertine people. This category of people neither succeeds at anything nor lets other people make progress, as Imam al-Sadiq states:

"A person who discharges his obligations without knowledge produces more corruption and aberration than what he corrects."(۲)

Likewise, the unrestrained religious scholar who does not do as he says deceives people as they respect him because of his knowledge while they inflict blows on Islam as a result of impiety; blows which the ignorant can never succeed at inflicting. It is for this reason that wherever piety has been defined and praised, the idea has been righteousness which is accompanied by knowledge, or else if these two get separated from each other, not only will

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۲, p. ۱۱۱, hadith ۲۵.

۲- Ibid., vol. ۱, p. ۲۰۸.

it not be profitable but detrimental as well. Also, if religious expertise and knowledge have been praised, the purport has been religious expertise and knowledge accompanied by works, because the religious scholar who does not put his knowledge .into practice is a robber

:Allah, the Exalted, addresses Prophet David (‘a) thus

O David! Do not place as an intermediary between you and I a religious scholar who“ has fallen in love with the world, because he will prevent you from traversing the course of love of Me. Verily, they are robbers on the highway ambushing Allah-seeking slaves. The least punishment I inflict upon them is that I drive out of their (hearts the sweetness of supplication of Me.”(١

A scholar without works is like a thief who robs a caravan in broad daylight. He knows better how to outwit people because he has knowledge. Such an academic is of no benefit to the religion; therefore, we ought to guard against being fed with deception. Therefore, piety and religious expertise will be effective and will result in the .prosperity of the individual and society once they co-occur

Companionship is permissible with people who, on the one hand, have strengthened their piety, bondage to Allah, servitude and obedience, and on the other hand, have succeeded at attaining religious expertise and sciences. Rapport with this kind of .divine scholars adds to man’s virtues and perfection

Even if the faqih in technical terms denotes learned people who have the ability of inference of Islamic law and

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ١, p. ۴۶ -١

inversion of the branches of the religion to the fundamental principles of religion, the faqih in the terminology of the Qur’an and hadiths means theologian; ranging from knowledge of the branches of religion, beliefs and ethics. But a scholar of beliefs and

.ethics is more suitable for companionship

The Prophet (S) states that now that you have made the intention to undertake the journey and have selected a suitable friend for yourself, guard against being contaminated by iniquity in that once you get polluted by sin, your movement and .progression will be futile and your efforts and acts of worship will bear no fruit

Man does not pursue sin purposelessly; transgression necessarily has sweetness, attraction and gravitation by which man gets contaminated. Even if these attractions are imaginative and are temptations of the Devil and lack reality, but man still conceives in sin attraction and sweetness which he pursues. So, what ought man to ?do in order to have the grace of not being contaminated by sin and resisting it

The best way of abstaining from sin is to perceive its danger and harm; losses and dangers which go with this transient pleasure and also know the permanent mal- .effects of sin both in this world and the hereafter

The attribute of a believer is that he has a special perception in regard to sin and it is this very perceptiveness which prevents him from committing sin. For a believer sin is a big stone which is about to fall on his head. He

p: ٨١

gets bothered once he commits sin and error. That perception has such an effect on the thought and contemplation that his conscience always instigates him against sin and he repents and seeks forgiveness when he perpetrates sin. He is like a person who sees a big stone on top of his head and is always worried that it will fall on his head. That is to say, the soul of this man is so pure and untainted that he shows a reaction against every sin and always engages in reproaching and reprimanding his .soul to the extent that he loses his sleep and tranquility too

Conversely, an infidel and a person who has contaminated his innate disposition with evil does not feel troubled and sin in his perception is like a fly which passes in front of his nose. (The meaning of infidel is not only a person who denies the existence of Allah

and the hereafter, but a person who denies one of the primary principles of religion is an infidel too.)

Besides the hadiths and Qur'anic verses, it is a psychological truth that repeating indecent actions divests them of their ugliness and as a result they manifest themselves as pleasurable and shame is no longer felt when committing them. Sin too is the same. If a particular sin is repeatedly committed, its villainy is removed from it and the result of this is that no shame is felt when committing it.

Right here a criterion can be presented

p: ۸۲

and that is that every person who wants to know whether he is on the boundary of belief or of infidelity ought to observe how his reaction is with regard to sin. If he notices that sin is nothing for him and pays no heed to it, then he should know that he is trudging the course of disbelief because feeling regret at committing sin indicates a pure soul and heedlessness of sin points to an unbelieving soul. The exigency of faith is that if anger and passion overcome man, as a result of which he commits wrongdoing, he immediately gets sorry and remorseful for his actions. In the event that such kind of a condition is absent in us, we ought to be worried for ourselves that we are trudging a dangerous course.

Paying Heed To Sin And Conceiving It As Great Is A Result Of Allah's Grace And Favor

"O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Exalted and Blessed, embodies His slave's sins in front of him once He desires his good and makes sin heavy and unbearable for him and He erases sin from the memory of a slave whom He intends bad for."

Allah, the Exalted, loves all human beings; if He did not love an individual He would not have created him. But Allah has exclusive grace and favor for his slaves. If this section [of humanity] commits sin, he embodies sin in their view because the first step in the direction of drowning in corruption and submerging in sin is forgetting sin, losing sight of sin and its requital. With regard to [the point] that

Allah has attention and favor for His special slaves and does not leave them alone, He conversely pays no heed to some of them and has left them alone. Every person can manage to asses for himself whether he is an object of Allah's mercy and grace or .not

If he has not forgotten his past sins, and sin is heavy and unbearable for him, he .ought to know that he is an object of Allah's mercy

It is clear that keeping the remembrance of sin is only practicable once it prevents the further perpetration of sin or otherwise if man remembers his wrongdoings but does not conceive them as unbearable on his shoulders, he has no qualms about .committing sin

Imam al-Sajjad ('a) in the Du'a' [he taught to one of his followers by the name] Abu :Hamzah al-Thumali states

I am the one whom You gave respite so as to give up committing sins and repent;" while I did not give up sins. You covered my sins but I did not feel ashamed and ".perpetrated sins again. I trespassed the limits so that You overlooked me

Therefore, once Allah intends good for any person, he always embodies sin for him, to the extent that he sees it as a heavy and unbearable load. When Allah has no favor for someone and intends bad for him, he leaves him alone and thereafter sin looks light .and unimportant to him

Of course, in the beginning Allah does not drive anyone away from

his mercy and does not intent bad for anyone, but after man has perpetrated ugly works and has stubbornly insisted upon committing sin, Allah makes him afflicted by .such requital

A person who is beloved by Allah is one who has succeeded at attaining the status of

servitude and nearness to Allah and man who is low in the sight of Allah is one who is far from Allah and has forgotten him. Once he forgets Allah, Allah too forgets him:

وَلاَ تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُو اللهَ فَأَنْساهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ...

"And be not like those who forsook Allah, so He made them forsake their own souls..."(١)

The Need For Paying Heed To The Greatness Of The One Who Is Being Disobeyed Not The Smallness Of Sin

"O Abu Dharr! Do not look at the smallness of sin, but look at the greatness of the One you are disobeying."

Sin can be looked at from three points of view:

١. Looking at the essence of sin, as regards its greatness and smallness.

٢. Looking at sin in respect of the doer [or agent] of the sin.

٣. Looking at sin with reference to the One who is being disobeyed.

In the Book and Sunnah, sins have been divided into two sections, every one of which has a different injunction and a separate punishment. The Qur'an states that once the list of works is given to some of the people, they will say:

... يا وَيْلَتَنا مالِ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ لاَ يُغادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلاَ كَبِيرَةً اِلاَّ أَحْصَاها...

"...Ah! Woe to us! What a book this is! It does not omit a small one nor a great one, but numbers them all..."(٢)

Perhaps, the difference

١- Surat al-Hashr ٥٩:١٩.

٢- Surat al-Kahf ١٨:٤٩.

between these two kinds is that promise of requital has been given for the greater sins while promise of punishment has not been given for the minor sins. Likewise, no limits have been placed over the small sins and a specific limit has been placed over .the greater sins

It is worth saying that it is possible for a person to commit an action which seems to him a small sin and [hence] forgivable, but be heedless of this fact that firstly repeating small sins is itself a great sin and persistence at it makes man an insolent perpetrator of sin. Secondly, he forgets Who is being sinned against and Whose .bounds he is trespassing

This section of the hadith hints at the second point of not just looking at the smallness of sin, but at Who is being disobeyed. Sometimes, one issue is in itself small but is .[considered] great because it is connected with a great man

Imagine that you are in the presence of an Infallible Imam ('a) and His Holiness orders you to do something, no matter how small: for instance, he orders you to bring him a blue plate, but you imagine that this order is very small and refrain from carrying it out because of this very reason. Is such an imagination logical? Is this the ?exigency of proper conduct? Is this disobedience acceptable

It certainly is not so, because in spite of the smallness of the order, the commander is very great and

p: ۸۶

the small order acquires greatness because of the one who orders. Now, apply this same example on the Divine Essence, despite that disobedience of Allah is not comparable to the disobedience of an Infallible Imam. Therefore, the criterion for the .ugliness of sin has to be the greatness of the Commander and the forbidder

Such a perception of sin can bring about a strong incentive in the direction of opposing the Devil and remove every kind of excuse-seeking from his carnal soul. Sometimes, a friend asks for a favor from someone within the limits of humanity, it is possible to

reject his request and say that you do not have any right to give me orders. But sometimes father, mother and/or teacher give orders disobeying of which is very ugly and sometimes the order is made by a religious jurisprudent and sometimes by an Infallible Imam and sometimes by Allah himself. In this instance, the higher the level of the commander or forbidder, the uglier the disobedience and the more worthy of .remonstration it will be

When the Devil entices you that one look at a strange woman is nothing, one minute of listening to prohibited music is nothing, you ought to pay attention to Who you are disobeying. It is for this reason that the Prophet (S) states to Abu Dharr that do not look at the smallness of sin but look at the greatness of the One who is being .disobeyed

O Abu Dharr! The anxiety and worry of"

p: ۸۷

a man with faith with regard to his sin is more than the fear of a sparrow which has ".been trapped in a net

Here, the Prophet (S) states another example of the reaction of a believer with regard to his sin, that if they set a trap to catch a sparrow and this very active and mobile creature gets trapped, it reacts forcefully and never becomes tranquil and calm but tries to free itself from the trap and sometimes its striving results in its death and perdition; it hits itself on the sides so much that it dies in the end. This is a result of its anxiety and worry for falling into the trap. The reaction of a believer with regard to his sin is like this too. When he feels that he has fallen into the Devil's trap, anxiety and worry encompasses his entire being, to the extent that he loses his peace and .tranquility and he always tries to free himself from the Devil's trap

We are not infallible and are always on the verge of error and sin, and there is not expectation either that we will not sin. It is likely that sometimes we fall in the Devil's trap (of course the meaning of being fallible is not that we must sin, because it is possible for people who are fallible not to sin, and the difference between them is that

the Infallible has a natural disposition which prevents him from committing sin, ordinary people

also can manage not to get afflicted by sin despite not having an infallible natural disposition.) In any case, if we get afflicted by sin, our faith necessitates that we always worry and make effort to repent, cry and return to Allah and free ourselves .from the consequences of sin

Lesson ۸: The Correspondence of Words with Actions and Guarding the Tongue

The Effects of the Correspondence and Lack of Correspondence of Words with Actions

O Abu Dharr! Every person whose words are in accordance with his actions has" received his of prosperity and every person whose works do not match with his ".actions has reprimanded himself on the Day of Recompense

The majority of people mention good works when they talk and emphasize the importance and value of those works and that they have to be discharged and that they have an effect on the perfection of man; but practically their words are not in accordance with their actions. There are very few people who match their words with .their actions

If we believe that the correspondence of words and actions is connected with the levels of faith, we will deduce that the people whose faith is more perfect are more truthful and their words correspond more with their actions; in reality, their conduct is .witness to their words

While elucidating the verse, "...these are they who are true to themselves and these are they who guard against evil,"(۱) 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may Allah be pleased with him, states, "Honesty is an attribute which encompasses all the virtues existent in knowledge and works, because truthfulness is a

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۷۷ -۱

disposition which accompanies all the ethical virtues, amongst them chastity, courage, wisdom and justice; because man cannot be separated from his belief, words and actions. Man's honesty denotes that his belief, word and works match with .one another; that is to say, he acts according to what he believes in and says

The natural disposition of man has been formed with the inherency of acknowledging the truth and inward submission to it, even if he may pretend otherwise. Therefore, once he has acknowledged the truth and is honest in his confession, he says what he believes in and acts in accordance with his words, it is in this instance that his faith becomes pure and his morals and works reach the stage of perfection."(۱)

He used to state, "Allah has called some people excessively honest, because the ".conduct of the truthful people is an example of their words

A person whose words are in accordance with his actions is honest too. But the excessively honest are at a higher level and this is said about a person who not only matches his words with his actions, but is in accordance with his actions too in all .instances

The Noble Prophet (S) states that a person whose actions are in accordance with his words has attained bliss. If such a person strives to harmonize his words and actions, he will attain the rank of the truthful. In contrast, man who does not do what he says is a hypocrite and liar, as the Qur'an

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱, p. ۴۳ -۱

calls the hypocrites who acknowledge the Prophet's (S) mission by their tongues but :do not believe it in their hearts liars

إِذَا جَاءَکَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّکَ لَرَسُولُ اللهِ وَاللهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّکَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَکَاذِبُونَ

When the hypocrites come to you, they say, ‘We bear witness that you are most“ surely Allah’s Apostle; and Allah knows that you are most surely His Apostle; and Allah (bears witness that the hypocrites are surely liars’.”(۱

:The untruthfulness of the words of the unbelievers is because

... يَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاللهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُونَ

They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts; and Allah best knows what is...“ (in their hearts.”(۲

The Prophet (S) states that a person who does not match his words with his actions only castigates himself because his words are indicative of the fact that he knows the truth and his obligations, denoting that proof has been made complete for him. It is natural that such an individual knows the truth and [even] recommends others to it, .but he is negligent in his own actions, he only has to castigate himself

This word of the Prophet (S) is directed at the preachers and sermonizers that they should be bound to their words and their actions ought to be a reflex of their beliefs .and words

Allah, the Exalted, castigates this section of people in the Glorious Qur’an when it :states

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

What! Do you enjoin men to be“

۱- Surat al-Munafiqun ۶۳:۱.

۲- Surat Al ‘Imran ۳:۱۶۷.

good and neglect your own souls while you read the Book, have you then no (sense?”(۱

Forgetting does not imply erasing from the memory, but denotes not practically) putting your words into action because it is likely that man remembers his words but (.does not put them into action

When he advises others compassionately and says do this work, and quit a certain work, how can he himself forget to discharge that act? Does his heart break more for the others than for himself? Does he love other people more than he loves himself? .Such a thing is not acceptable

:Imam 'Ali ('a) states

O creatures of Allah! Fear Allah! Fear Allah in regard to your own selves and those" (you love the most."(٢)

His Holiness' intention is that you [obviously] love yourselves more than the others, and if you love other people, it is for the reason that they are of service to you, they make the means of pleasure, ease and prosperity ready for you and you derive gratification from companionship, conversation and association with them, therefore you are the origin and you want others for yourself. Now how do you compassionately advise others while you forget and do not feel sorry for yourselves and do not put ?what you say into action

:Allah states

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لاَ تَفْعَلُونَ * كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لاَ تَفْعَلُونَ

O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to"

.Surat Baqarah ٢:٤٤ -١
.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٤٩٤, sermon [khutbah] ١٥۶, trans. Fayd al-Islam -٢

(Allah that you should say that which you do not do."(١)

The Role of Sin in Being Deprived of Subsistence

O Abu Dharr! All too often an individual gets deprived of the sustenance which has“ ”.been pre-ordained for him because of the sin which he commits

This is another explanation intended to draw man’s attention to the bad effects which .go with sin in this world for man and the deprivations that result from sin

On the basis of the differences in [the levels of] knowledge, every person is spoken to in one tongue or another. If an individual has attained the station of love, it is said to him, “What kind of a lover are you who opposes your beloved?” A lover is one who always tries to find out what his beloved wants from him so as to fulfill it, and to discover what his beloved does not like so as to refrain from it, how possible is it for a lover to oppose his beloved who says do so and so and abstain from so and so. For those who have the love of Allah and His saints [awliya’], this is the best way of .stopping them from committing sin

It has to be brought to the attention of the lovers of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) that sin is detested by their beloved. The most abhorred works in the perception of the Imams (‘a) is sin. Sin is like a rotten corpse and people who have perceiving eyes and a strong inward intuition conceive its foul smell at a

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.Surat al-Saff ۶۱:۲-۳ -۱

long distance. Now, how can a lover of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), who wants to get close to ?them, contaminate himself with something which causes their disgust

If a person intends to go and see his friend, he gets rid of the bad smell of his mouth and body, and cleans and perfumes himself, so that his friend may not be bothered by him. Sin causes bad smell and contamination of our selves. If we love the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and would like to have a connection with them, we ought to cleanse our souls of contaminations so that they may take pleasure in having relationship with us. Therefore, the way of preventing individuals who have attained love of Allah and the .Ahl al-bayt (‘a) from sinning is to incite their feelings of affection

It goes without saying that all those who discharge the obligatory acts of worship quit the forbidden actions, but based on the levels of their knowledge, this love differs [from one man to another]. Sometimes, this love reaches such an extent that man, along the way of union with the Beloved, overlooks everything, even the eternal :Garden of bliss

O my Lord! I can bear the fire of hell, but how can I bear being separated from" (you?"(۱

In "Munajat-i Muhibban" (lovers' litany), the ninth litany of the "Munajat-e Khamsa :'Asharah", we read

O my Lord! Is there anyone who has tasted the sweetness of Your love and chosen" "?other than You

If people have not attained that level of love

۱- Du'a' al-Kumayl.

of Allah and the Infallible Imams ('a) enough to withhold them from committing sin, they have to be warned about the repercussions and consequences of sin. The tortures, being deprived of prosperity and paradise, the ominous effects of sin in the world and the hereafter have to be counted. That which motivates man to discharge his duties and to abstain from certain actions is fear and hope, fear of being driven .away from bliss and hope of attaining benefit

Therefore, the best and most practicable way of guiding man is drawing his attention to the ill consequences of sin in this world and the hereafter. This is the same method which the Noble Prophet (S) has employed in this section, because some people perceive the Day of Resurrection as far, despite that in accordance with the Islamic :point of view, the hereafter is near and at hand, as Allah states

إِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهُ بَعِيدًا * وَنَرِيهَا قَرِيبًا

“Surely, they think it to be far off and we see it nigh.”(1)

One of the worldly losses resulting from sin is being deprived of sustenance. Among the instances of sustenance are daily food and clothing.

It has been narrated in a lot of hadiths that Allah, the Exalted, has pre-ordained the sustenance of every living creature and this pre-destination is sometimes definite [or fixed] and sometimes conditional [or suspended]; that is to say, it gets increased or decreased as a result of our works. Some of the good works result in the increase of sustenance and

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1- Surat al-Ma‘arij ۷۰:۶-۷.

some evil deeds result in the decrease of sustenance.

Once we know that this sustenance which we sometimes earn by our own efforts and sometimes reaches us freely from Allah will be taken away from us as a result of our committing sin, we would commit sin less frequently.

Sin in the Chain of Causes

Sin changes formulae and renders the physical causes ineffective. The Qur’an states to us that in addition to the apparent repercussions of wrongdoing, sin has other consequences too, whose connection with their causes is not discernable by the physical senses. The Qur’an states:

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِيمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِكُمْ...

“And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought...”(1)

In reality, in a world governed by the order of cause and effect, no phenomena can be considered as having no cause and on the other hand afflictions cannot be attributed to Allah who is the ultimate good; therefore, it is man who directs afflictions towards

.himself

:Elsewhere, the Qur’an states

... فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

Therefore, let those beware who go against His order lest a trial afflict them or...“ (there befall them a painful chastisement.”(٢

Therefore, the verses of the Qur’an clarify this truth that a great deal of ordeals and deprivations result from sin, in the same way that good works and piety cause the .downpour of graces and blessings

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكَاتٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالأَرْضِ...

And if the people of the towns had“

١- Surat al-Shawra ۴٢:٣٠.
٢- Surat al-Nur ٢۴:۶٣.

believed and guarded (against evil), We would certainly have opened up for them (blessings from the heaven and the earth...”(١

In some instances the relationship which exists between sin and the affliction resulting therefrom is more or less discernable, like sins which cause certain illnesses, but this relationship is not perceptible in all instances. Sometimes, certain consequences arising from wrongdoing are not perceivable to man, like when man prepares food and [unfortunately or fortunately] something dirty and contaminating falls into it at the time of consumption, sustenance that was ready but is suddenly lost .by man

Now, extend this sustenance to other foods and things as well; because all the graces are sustenance. A house is sustenance, a car is sustenance, and everything else which man makes use of is sustenance. In many instances being deprived of them is a

.result of committing sin

Sustenance ought to be extended to spiritual sustenance too, because whatever brings about the perfection of our souls is sustenance too. Knowledge and faith are .provisions as well; the favor of worship too is sustenance

Sometimes, committing sin causes man to be deprived of the opportunity to worship. It has been narrated in a hadith that it is likely that man is unsuccessful at waking up at night to fulfill the recommendable prayers as a result of sin, even if he makes himself ready and tries to wake up on time, but either he does not wake up from sleep altogether or indolence stops him from fulfilling that

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.Surat al-A'raf ٧:٩۶ -١

recommendable duty. Therefore, depriving man of the grace to worship is one of the .mal-effects of sin

For every reason paying attention to the bad effects of sin is one of the causes which can prevent man from committing sin: that he ought to think that sin makes his .economic endeavors ineffective and deprives him of sustenance

Because of the relationship which exists between sin and deprivations and afflictions, when some great ethical personalities got afflicted by affliction, they used to think about what sin they have committed to be afflicted by this ordeal. They narrate that one of the great ethical mentors in Tehran was passing in an alley when an animal [suddenly] scared him, he sat down [at once] and sunk deep into thought as to what !sin he had committed so as to deserve the bother of the animal

Guarding the Tongue and Keeping Aloof from Vain Pursuits

O Abu Dharr! Abstain from whatever is not for your benefit and not to utter what has" no reward for you and protect your tongue in the same way that you safeguard your ".money

What has been mentioned in this section is complementary to the previous explanations about preventing an individual from sin. A person who wants to abstain from sin has to put limits on himself, as has been said that whoever is moving along a precipice ought to fear lest he falls into it. A person who wants to abstain from sin has to keep aloof from its prerequisites, and quit some of the things that are permissible.

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For instance, if one wants to abstain from looking at strange people, they ought to avoid looking at some of their close relatives.

If someone wants to stop listening to haram (forbidden) music, he ought to stop listening to halal (permissible) music first. If one wants to avoid being contaminated by lies and gossip, he ought to avoid conversations which are likely to include lies. Of course, it is difficult for man to abstain from all the permissible things which are likely to propel him towards sin, especially a person who is at the beginning of the journey, but people who intend to attain spiritual perfection of the soul have to trudge this course, whether they like it or not.

The Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr to abstain from vain activities, in the same way that the Qur'an believes prosperity and bliss as embedded in abstinence from vain pursuits:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِی صَلاَتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ * وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ

"Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers, and who keep aloof from what is vain."(۱)

A person who wants to attain prosperity and bliss has to keep aloof from actions which have no benefit for him, even if those words are permissible, and utilize his time doing profitable and fruitful work.

The Noble Prophet's (S) other advice to Abu Dharr is that he ought to abstain from words that are not beneficial to him.

Man ought to be very sensitive with regard to his

.Surat al-Mu'minun ٢٣:١-٣ -١

tongue. One must try to abstain from uttering even permissible words because sometimes one word is uttered from one's mouth which results in bad worldly and heavenly effects. The reason why it has repeatedly been said in the hadiths to withhold your tongues and do not utter useless words is because sometimes man cannot manage to control his tongue and gets affected by lies, gossip and making fun of others and the rest of the diseases of the tongue. It is for this reason that some of .the great men preferred to stay as quiet as possible

The Noble Prophet (S) states that you ought to strive to guard your tongue in the same way that you make effort to safeguard money and gold coins. Look at the way you protect your money, you put it in a safe and close its door strongly and put it in a safe place, guard your tongue, whose value is more than that of money, in the same way too. Allah has provided you with barriers for your mouth, and for those barriers .He has provided teeth and lips which limit the tongue within those barriers

Therefore, try not to free it. Abstain from even permissible words because you expend your energy and strength in vain and in this same way you will be propelled towards sin and errors bit by bit until finally you will be pulled towards sin and forbidden actions [muharramat]. How much difference is there between talking about other people

and gossiping [ghaybah]? Talking about other people along with gossip is a great sin which is seventy times greater than committing fornication in the Ka'bah! This is not a .difference we can hope to reduce bit by bit once we get afflicted by it

Lesson ٩: The Value and Importance of Prayer and the Differences of Status of the Dwellers of Paradise

Subdividing Some of the Prophet's (S) Advices

point

The Prophet's (S) advices which have been the object of discussion can be divided into three sections:

First section

The first section was about waking man up from negligence because he is, on the basis of his animal nature, more motivated by worldly activities, satiating his sensual instincts and desires of the flesh. It is for this reason that he forgets the beginning [of creation] and the Day of Resurrection.

Even though some people are aware about the goal and ultimate aim of their creation, but still most of the people are heedless of the aim of their creation. They do not know the reason why they have been created and where they are going and what they ought to do. Therefore, they have to be awoken and the sense of responsibility incited in them. The first section of the prophet's (S) admonitions was in the direction of getting rid of negligence and making man pay heed to his responsibilities and that the priceless asset of life is at his free disposal which he ought to derive benefit from.

Section two

After man's being aware about the ultimate goal and the need to select the path which leads him to that aim, the incumbency of acquiring knowledge and gaining awareness

is brought to attention; it is for this reason that in the second section concentration has been placed on acquisition of knowledge and the responsibilities of the divine scholars. It has also been mentioned that the most necessary knowledge is awareness which imparts the ultimate goal of creation and conveys the means of attaining it, which is called divine sciences.

Third section

In this section the need for putting our knowledge to practicable usage in fulfilling our known responsibilities and duties has been mentioned, and it has been made known that works find fulfillment in two aspects: the first aspect is the positive and constructive activities, that is to say the activities that ought to be done. The second aspect is the negative activities, that is to say, the prohibited and the forbidden works which ought to be abstained from. The fundamental point in this section is the need to perceive the heavy price of sin and the effects of getting contaminated by it. After these three sections, the fourth section of the Prophet's (S) admonitions will be .discussed

Fourth section

Man ought not to content himself with discharging the obligatory duties and abstaining from the forbidden actions and imagine that he no longer has [any more] .duties

Even though attaining this position is important, but still this is just the first step for attaining his ultimate goal. It is axiomatic that man cannot manage to abstain from sins and perform the obligatory actions and in short, a person cannot take the next steps without

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taking the first step, but this [first] step, in comparison with the remaining steps, is a short distance already traversed, and man currently has a very long way to go. Therefore, man has to be encouraged to undertake effort and activity and awaken in him the motivation not to content himself with discharging the obligatory works and .quitting sins and the forbidden actions

The Station of Allah's Devotees and Nocturnal Worshipers

O Abu Dharr! Allah takes a group of people to paradise and then grants them so" much favor that they get tired of it, but when they look at the others residing in higher

levels of paradise, they recognize them and say, 'O Lord! These are our brothers whom we used to live with in the world, why have you given them preference [over us]?'

"It will be said in response, 'Far from it! Far from it! They were hungry when you were full, and they were thirsty as a result of fasting when you were satiated, and they kept vigil at night performing acts of devoted worship while you slept, and they were outside in the way of Allah while you were enjoying ease inside your houses.'"

On these sentences the Prophet (S) has portrayed a scene of the hereafter, a scene where man has found his way to paradise as a result of discharging obligatory actions and abstaining from forbidden actions. There is no room for him to talk about hell and its perceptions, because he has been saved from the danger of the inferno and has become

a dweller of the Garden of eternal bliss, but he has been a man of myopic ambition who contented himself with the low levels of heaven and did not have the resolve to undertake higher steps and attain higher levels [of paradise]. Now, they portray to him that even if you attained heaven by means of your discharging obligatory duties and responsibilities but still there are other people who are higher than you and you ought to try to attain their stations.

Allah makes a lot of people enter heaven and grants them a great deal of graces, to the extent that they get occupied with utilizing and deriving pleasure from those blessings but for a time. (The Prophet's (S) expression is that Allah grants so many blessings to them that they eventually get tired of them. Of course, this phrasing is common parlance, otherwise there is no tiredness in the Garden of eternal bliss, as the Qur'an states:

... لَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا لُغُوبٌ

"...toil shall not touch us therein, nor shall fatigue therein afflict us."(1)

Therefore, the Prophet's (S) intention is that they will be granted whatever they) (.want

All at once these dwellers of the Garden look at their friends who have achieved higher stations, and get surprised. They make a humble petition, saying, "O Lord! These were our friends with whom we associated in the world, performed the prayers with in the same row and were of the same regiment during divine battles, why have you

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۱- Surat Fatir ۳۵:۳۵.

"?preferred them over us and granted them higher stations

They will be answered, "You and them have a great deal of differences, they were hungry when you were full; they were thirsty when you were satiated and they used to go hungry undertaking recommendable fasts. When you were occupied with reaping the benefits of blessings and permissible foods, they were fasting. Even if you have not committed any sin, still they used to keep their stomachs empty of food and drink in the hot summer. You used to content yourselves to you discharging obligatory duties and thereafter used to take a rest, but they never went to sleep and were busy with acts of devotion and performing secret prayers to Allah." In the Qur'an's :statement, they were the people who

كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِن اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُون * وَبِالأَسْحارِهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ

"They used to sleep but a little in the night and in the morning they used to seek (forgiveness."(۱

The Differences in the Gratification Enjoyed by the Dwellers of the Different Stations of Paradise

In these statements the Prophet (S) reminds us about the different stations and ranks of paradise. It has been explicitly stated in a great deal of the verses of the Qur'an

and the hadiths that in the same way that hell has levels, heaven too has ranks and stations. Its lowest level specially belongs to the people who performed their obligatory duties and the highest level of paradise is the station of contentment [maqam-i ridwan] which is reserved for the special saints [awliya’] and sincere .worshipers [mukhlisin] of Allah

:Allah states

وَعَدَ اللهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

p: ۱۰۵

.Surat al-Dhariyat ۵۱:۱۷-۱۸ -۱

جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِی مَنْ تَحْتِهَا الاَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِی جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِن اللهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah has promised to the believing men and the believing women gardens, beneath“ which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual (abode, and best of all is Allah’s goodly pleasure, that is the grand achievement.”(۱

With regard to the sentence ‘and the best of all is Allah’s goodly pleasure [ridwan]’, the late ‘Allamah Tabataba’i states, “Allah’s goodly pleasure [ridwan] is higher and better than all the blessings of the eternal garden and it is for this reason that the term ‘pleasure’ [ridwan] has been used to function as an indefinite or indeterminate noun [in this verse] because indefinite nouns have no limit whatsoever, or that no matter how little the pleasure of Allah, it still is greater than all blessings, not from the perspective that all the blessings are derived from the pleasure of Allah—even if this is the truth—but from the perspective that the reality of servitude and devotional service of Allah to which the Qur’an calls [mankind] is servitude springing from love of Allah, not because of coveting the Garden of bliss and/or fear of hell. The highest prosperity and bliss for a lover is to win the pleasure of their Beloved, not striving to (please and satiate himself.”(۲

Servitude out of love and affection for Allah, as has been narrated in some of the

hadiths, is the highest form of devotion and

.Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah) ۹:۷۲ -۱

.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. p. ۳۵۴ -۲

is especially reserved for the free, liberal and righteous. It is for this reason that it can be claimed that the highest station of paradise is the station of contentment which is especially reserved for the righteous and liberal, who worship Allah with purity of .intention

:In connection with the levels of the hereafter, Allah states

أُنْظُرْ كَيفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُم عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَلَلآخِرَهُ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَاتٍ وَأَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيلاً

See how We made some of them excel others, and certainly the hereafter is much" (superior in excellence."(۱

This ayat makes it known that the differences in the levels of people depends upon their efforts and endeavors. It is not so that a person whose works are little will be the same with a person whose works are many. In addition to that, the levels and ranks of the hereafter are not comparable with different levels of the world, and have nothing to do with the use of facilities; because the hereafter is higher than can be imagined .at all

The criteria for superiority in the world are possession of property and wealth and position and rank in the world, and there is no doubt that these are limited standards. But the criteria for superiority in the hereafter and the differences of its levels depends on the level of man's piety and purity of intention which are the states of the heart and soul of man and without doubt are not comparable with the differences of .the world

As has been pointed out, the Prophet's

.Surat al-Isra' (or Bani Isra'il) ۱۷:۲۱ -۱

S) statements in this section warn man that he ought not to content himself with) fulfilling the obligatory actions and abstaining from the forbidden actions, of course a person who contents himself with the low levels of paradise can please himself with this very limit, but a day comes when he sees his friends and peers residing in higher stations and will regret on that day. In order for us to attain the higher levels, it is .necessary to reduce our rest and ease and engage in worship more

It is worth saying that rest to the necessary limit is desirable and sometimes incumbent and all too often the prerequisite for an obligatory duty is itself obligatory, like when one's lack of rest leads to tiredness and lack of vigor during prayer. Or, if he does not sleep on time, he does not understand his lessons. What has been castigated is unnecessary and too much rest, which if it does not lead to hell, at least it holds an .individual behind the others

The Prophet's (S) Intense Love for Prayer

In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) introduces prayer as the best and most praiseworthy work which an individual can occupy himself with during times of :leisure

O Abu Dharr! The Glorious and Honorable Lord has made prayer the light of my eyes," and made it to me as beloved as food is to the hungry and water is to the thirsty. One who is hungry gets satisfied when one eats food, and one who is

".thirsty gets satiated with drinking water, but I never get contented with my prayers

It is better for a person who has decided to get advice from the Noble Prophet (S), and has chosen His Holiness (S) as his role model, to see how the spiritual wayfaring and conduct of the Noble Prophet (S) is. That is why at this stage the Noble Prophet (S)

introduces himself as a practical role model and this is the best means of instruction .for people who love the Noble Prophet (S) and would like to traverse his course

,It has been narrated in a hadith

".I love from your world sweet scent and women, but prayer is the light of my eyes"

That the Noble Prophet (S) said that prayer is the light of my eyes is the best expression which man uses with regard to their most beloved one and say, "So and so ".is the light of my eyes

In the Qur'an Allah, the Exalted, has introduced Prophet Moses (S) as the light of his mother's eyes, where it states that, "O Moses we inspired your mother to put the infant in a box and throw it on the sea. Then, the waves of the sea took the newborn to the shores of the sea to My enemy and he got the baby from the sea and I of my own grace showered love upon thee (so that they must love you) and so that you may get built in front of My own eyes

p: ۱۰۹

".(and with My favor)

:In continuation, it states

إِذْ تَمْشِی أُخْتُک فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى مَنْ يَكْفُلُهُ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَى أُمِّكَ كَیْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلاَ تَحْزَنَ...

"When your sister went and said, 'Shall I direct you to one who will take charge of him? So we brought you back to your mother, that her eye might be cooled and she (should not grieve..."(۱

The Noble Prophet (S) states that prayer is the light of his eyes and because we cannot perceive this point, we will engage in a sweet explanation of it so that it may be comprehensible to us. We need to eat and drink and if we go for hours on end without food, we get very hungry and the most desirable thing for us is food. And likewise, we get very thirsty when we go for hours on end without water and the most .desirable thing for us is a drop of cold water

The Prophet states that his love for prayer is like man's love for food and water when hungry and thirsty with this difference that a hungry man gets satiated after drinking .water while I do not get contented with my prayers

With this expression the value of prayer becomes clear and that if after performing the obligatory duties man finds an opportunity [of free time], prayer is the best recommendable work to get busy with, as was the conduct of the Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams ('a) and for the purpose of making this clear, we

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.Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۴۰ -۱

:will cite a few hadiths

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states "'Ali ('a) was such that whenever an unpleasant issue occurred, he used to perform the prayers and recite this ayat, "And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble (ones.(۱)"(۲

:Imam al-Sajjad ('a) states

No calamity befell the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali ('a), save that he" performed a thousand rakats of prayer, gave charity to sixty poor people and fasted (for three days on that day."(۳

It has [thus] been narrated in "Bihar al-Anwar" with regard to consistence and :steadfastness in prayer

The Prophet (S) stood for prayer for ten years until his legs got swollen and his face" (became pale..."(۴

O Abu Dharr! Every man who performs twelve additional rak'ats besides the" obligatory prayers has a determined right upon Allah that is a palace in the Garden of ".eternal bliss

O Abu Dharr! As long as you are engaged in prayer, you are knocking on the door of“ the Omnipotent King and the door opens upon every person who knocks a lot on the ”.door of the King

This is another expression for motivating man towards prayer. The Noble Prophet (S) states that a person who prays knocks on the door of Allah. A person who has an issue with Allah has to go to the doorstep of His house and prayer is similar to going to knock on Allah’s door, and it is not possible for the door of Allah to remain closed to one

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۱- Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۴۵.

۲- Mustadrik al-Wasa’il, vol. ۲, p. ۴۸۱.

۳- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۴۱, p. ۱۳۲.

۴- Ibid., vol. ۱۰, p. ۴۰.

.who goes to knock on it and insists upon his request

Therefore, if you would like to be the object of Allah’s attention and for His door of mercy and acceptance to be opened, knock a lot on it and be steadfast in prayer. It is likely that the door will not get opened on the first and second knock because of man’s being contaminated [with sin] or because of divine wisdom, but finally it gets .open

Beyond the shadow of doubt, the doors of Allah’s mercy are always open for man because it is not possible for Him to invite people, on the one hand, and close the doors of His mercy for them, on the other hand. The doors of Allah’s mercy are only closed to those who deny His signs and the proud, who of course have closed the :doors of divine mercy for themselves

اِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا واسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لاَ تُفَتَّحُ وَلَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ...

Lo! They who deny Our revelations and scorn them, for them the gates of heaven will“ (not be opened…”(۱)

It is worthy of mention that what has been recorded in some ayats and hadiths that there are doors for the sky and/or what has been recorded in this hadith that as long as man is in a state of prayer, he is knocking on Allah’s door is meant to serve as an intelligible and sensible comparison so that spiritual and metaphysical issues are perceivable and comprehensible to us. The truth is that there

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.Surat al-A‘raf ۷:۴۰ -۱

is no barrier and veil between Allah and His slave and it is man’s evil deeds which serve as a barrier of his attention to Allah and in reality, man gets deprived of Allah’s blessings because of his sin. The key which opens the door of Allah’s mercy and takes away the barriers is devotion and servitude to Allah and prayer is the best form of .devotion

In continuation of the recommendation about the blessing which a devoted worshiper :enjoys, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Whenever a believing man stands in prayer, Allah’s mercy completely“ encompasses him up to the Throne, an angel will be assigned for him calling, ‘O progeny of Adam! If you knew what gains you reap during prayer and with whom you ”.’speak, you would never stop it

The Noble Prophet (S) states that a person who performs a lot of prayer is covered with the blessings of Allah from the parting of the head to the Throne. It is natural that a person who is interested in station and opportunity lengthens their prayers. Most important of all, Allah appoints an angel that continually shouts to the sons of Adam if they knew with Whom they were having intimate talk and with whom they are conversing with, they would not stop their prayers and never feel tired of praying. Pay heed to before Whom you are standing and with Whom you are having

correspondence, so that you may understand the importance of your prayer by

p: ۱۱۳

means of this awareness. If you knew what benefits, virtues and favors are granted .by means of prayer, you would never give an end to it

Perceiving the Sweetness of Prayer Is the Secret of Its Continuance

For the purpose of the continuity and steadfastness in prayer, what is important is for man to derive pleasure from worship and believe that he is gaining benefit; man quickly gets tired of activities which do not give him gratification. The sweetness of prayer causes man to become more interested in prayer and this satisfaction and enjoyment is not to be achieved save by quitting and abstaining from sin. Wrong-doing leads to the pleasure of worship being divested of man. It is for this reason that the supplication of some of the Infallibles ('a) was thus, "O Lord make us taste the ".sweetness of worship

It sometimes happens that the best food is prepared for a sick person but because of his illness, he feels that the food has no taste and pleasure. Maybe, a soundly healthy man derives satisfaction from eating one piece of dry bread. Therefore, what is .important is that the feeling of need and gratification ought to be enlivened in man

In the previous sentences, it has been pointed out that the Prophet (S) stated that prayer was more desirably sweet to him than food is to a hungry man and water is to a thirsty man; because they get satisfied from eating and drinking but he does not get .contented with prayer

In regard to the sweetness of worship

p: ۱۱۴

:for an enamored slave, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

If you perceive the sweetness of devotion to Allah, look at the favors and light of ..." worship and brighten your heart, you will not quit even for a moment, even if you are

(torn to pieces.”(1)

:In another hadith, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states

“... (I sought the sweetness of prayer and finally found it in the quitting of sins.”(2)

Lesson 10: The Leaders of Heaven and the Status of Some of the Duties and the Levels of Paradise

The Leaders of Paradise

:With regard to the leaders of paradise, the Noble Prophet (S) says

“O Abu Dharr! Happy are those who are the standard-bearers on the Day of Resurrection, who hold the flag in front of people and precede them towards heaven, those are the same people who take precedence over others in going to the Mosques early in the morning and at other times [of the day].”

All human beings belonging to every age desire to take precedence over others. Of course, this competing and contesting is blameworthy if it is in connection to the world, but competition and taking precedence over others with regard to the hereafter is not only free of blame, but also a sign of man’s growth and seeking prosperity. Because the prosperity of man depends on having intimacy with Allah and if the believers take precedence over the others in this regard, it is not out of ostentation but in order to attain bliss.

Emphasis has been laid on this issue in many instances in the Qur’an; in one of the instances Allah states:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا

1- 17 section [bab] Mustadrik al-Wasa’il, vol. 11, p. 253.

2- 101 section [bab] Ibid., vol. 13, p. 173.

السَّمَوَاتُ وَالأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

“And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord; and a garden, the extensiveness of which is as the heavens and the earth, it is prepared for those who guard against evil.”(1)

In reality, this ayat makes known the call of man’s natural disposition because his basic nature desires his perfection and wants him to be more perfect than the others.

Natural Disposition and the Search for Perfection

Without doubt, man yearns for the ultimate perfection and that is in intimacy with Allah. It is for this reason that he makes use of every means and resources in order to attain it. But limited perfections are not man’s ultimate object of desire because they lose their appeal to higher perfections, and secondly, man gets satiated after attaining his desires. It is for this reason that they have said that union [or attainment] is the grave of love, that is to say man cannot be a lover of limited beauty and goodness but he naturally is a lover of immaculate perfection and yearns for Allah.

Man’s deepest desire is a divine want, and if the veils of error were removed from his eyes and he were able to perceive his Beloved, he would have intimate acts of devotion, like ‘Ali (‘a).

Allah states in the Qur’an:

... أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“... surely by Allah’s remembrance are hearts set at rest.”(2)

The term ‘remembrance of Allah’ [bi-dhikr Allah] is a monopoly; that is to say it is only by Allah’s remembrance that hearts are set at rest and

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۱- Surat Al ‘Imran ۳:۱۳۳.

۲- Surat al-Ra‘d ۱۳:۲۸.

it removes anxiety and worry away and man is terribly wrong if he imagines that

property, wealth, position and status set his heart at rest. Of course, the Qur'an does not forbid attaining them, but it states that they do not set man's heart at rest.(1)

It has been said that man yearns for ideal perfection and he makes use of every means and tools; one of the means of attaining spotless perfection is prayer as an intimate dialogue between an individual and his Lord and enlivening the mosques. The Prophet (S) states that happy are those who take precedence and leadership on the Day of Resurrection. They lead men towards the Garden of eternal bliss and the others fall behind them in order to find their way to paradise. They are people who used to go to the mosques before everyone early in the morning and at other times of the day.

In order to make this comprehensible to the mind, heed ought to be paid to this issue that one of the qualities of man's soul is that he gets motivated once he sees the others trudging the course of goodness and welfare. The axiom of yielding to patterns and looking up to role models has been accepted as an indisputable means of edification of personality. In truth, the model plays the most fundamental role in man's way of life.

If man takes precedence at performing good works, he attracts the attention of other people and as a result, the

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۱- Shahid Mutahhari, Insan-e Kamil (the Perfect Man), pp. ۹۴-۹۶.

others too follow his lead. This matter (yielding to example) is an object of attention for youths. The older the people grow, the more they desire to be role models for other human beings, and this feeling is manifested in their conduct and performance of responsibilities. As a result, the others too get inspired to do good works.

It is natural that when one man in a community begins to do something, the others easily follow his lead. For instance, in a religious school, the others get encouraged by the conduct of a number of people who take the lead at going to the noon [zuhr]

prayers. But if some people do not take leadership, the others do not pay heed to the time of prayer and to being in the mosque and/or if they pay heed [at all], do not firmly decide to undertake fulfilling it. This is an expression of that same spiritual and psychological truth which has been called yielding to role models.

If man performs works secretly for the sake of not getting contaminated by sanctimony, his works are good and praiseworthy, but if a person openly performs a good work in order to encourage others, not only is his action free from blame, but very valuable and productive because he discharges his duties not with the intention of showing off but of motivating others.

In this regard, Allah states:

... وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً...

"...and spend benevolently out of what we have given them secretly

p: ١١٨

and openly..."(١)

Some people have said that the purpose of spending secretly in the way of Allah is for man to keep afar from hypocrisy and the purpose of spending openly is for inspiring others, therefore there is goodness in every aspect. The work of both the one who prays secretly for the purpose of keeping afar from sanctimony and that of one who prays openly in the mosque in order to encourage others is good. In addition to that, a person who takes the lead in going to the mosque with a sincere intention and far from hypocrisy and [his action] results in inspiring them, his reward is twice as much and he will be the standard-bearer on the Day of Resurrection because his action has opened the way to the mosque.

The late Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi, may he reside in Allah's garden of eternal bliss, was bound to going to the Holy Shrine [of Qum] early in the morning before the call to prayer [adhan]. During the early days of our religious education, we sometimes used to succeed at going to the Shrine early in the morning. Sometimes, snow used to fall

and with complete wonder we used to see the late Ayatullah Mar'ashi sitting behind the door with his cloak pulled over his head. This was one of his high and eminent qualities. How much does such conduct encourage others to do the same? When the religious students used to see a religious legal authority sitting behind

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.Surat al-Ra'd ۱۳:۲۲ -۱

the door of the mosque early in the morning, they used to get encouraged to be .present in the Shrine early in the morning

It is proper for us to cite two hadiths with regard to the importance of being present in the mosque because mention has been made about the importance of taking .precedence when going to the mosque

:The Noble Prophet (S) states

Verily, there are attendants for the mosques who are companions of the angels." When they do not attend the mosques on some excuse, they comfort them and visit (them when they get sick and help them whenever they have need."(۱

:In another hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

Sitting in the mosque to wait for the time of prayer to arrive is worship. Also, they said" that Allah builds two houses in paradise for a person whose speech is the Qur'an and (whose house is the mosque."(۲

The Status and Rank of Some Duties

point

:In continuation of the hadith of Abu Dharr, the Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Prayer is the mainstay of religion and that which flows on the tongue in" remembrance of Allah is more important. Charity erases sin and a word which is

beneficial for the people is more significant than charity. Fasting extinguishes the fire and the fast of the tongue is more superb. And the jihad (spiritual struggle) is honor ".and dignity and the jihad of the tongue is more eminent

a) The Status and Rank of Prayer

The Noble Prophet (S) states that prayer is the cornerstone of religion and that without it religion crumbles, but its invocations

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.Mustadrik al-Wasa'il, vol. ۱, p. ۳۵۸ -۱
.Ibid -۲

and words are more important and greater than the rest of the works because entreaties are a manifestation of the devotion and humility of a believing slave before .Allah and also with those implorations the immensity of His mercy is demonstrated

It is because of its delicate role in reforming the spiritual and religious personality of man that prayer has been set forth as the foundation and linchpin of religion. In reality, prayer embodies man's faith and grants perfection to his spiritual identity. It is for this reason that the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Infallibles have .been granted praiseworthy importance

:The Noble Prophet (S) states in a hadith

Prayer is the greatest obligatory duty after knowledge of Allah and is the first thing" which will be asked of a slave on the Day of Resurrection. If it gets accepted, the rest of the works also get approved and if it does not get consented to, the rest of the (works are disapproved."(۱

:In connection with the status of sajdah (the prostration), Imam 'Ali ('a) states

If the person performing prayers could perceive the mercy of Allah that" (encompasses him, he would never raise his head from prostration."(۲

In connection with the role of prayer in the purification of the soul, edification of character and cleansing the psyche of impurities and corruption, the Noble Prophet :(S) states

If there were in the house of anyone of you a stream and you washed yourselves“ five times in it, would any dirt remain on

p: ۱۲۱

.Tafsir Abu al-Futuh, vol. ۱, p. ۱۰۳ -۱
.Ghurar al-Hikam, p. ۶۰۵ -۲

your bodies? One of the companions said, ‘No’. The Noble Prophet (S) stated, ‘The similitude of prayer to a flowing river is that whenever a person prays, his sins are (forgiven in the intermittence of two prayers’.”(۱

b) The Status and Rank of Fasting

The Prophet (S) has set forth fasting as a shield against the fire because it is a means of ascending through the spiritual stations, of man’s growth, and it is a barrier against .the Devil

Mankind possesses a carnal soul which is always pulling him towards spiritual decadence and losing his divine personality. It is for this reason that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) :states

I am afraid of two things for you, one is obeying the carnal soul and the other is“ protracted hopes; because following the carnal soul is an impediment to right and (prolonged hopes cause forgetting the hereafter.”(۲

Because Allah has love and affection for His slaves, He has provided them with the means of making up for the oppression that they have committed against themselves .and has caused them to be driven away from Allah’s divine presence

One of those means is fasting which cleanses the soul of the effects of its ugly works

.and brings about patience and endurance against hardships and sins

Regardless of the importance of fasting and its role in self-edification, special reward has been designated for fasting on some of the days and months; amongst them fasting in the month of Sha‘ban and Rajab discharging of which was resolutely done by the saints [awliya’] of religion and

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.Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah, vol. ٣, p. ٧ -١

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٧, p. ۴١٩ -٢

.the great scholars

c) The Status and Rank of Jihad

Jihad and striving in the way of Allah is a cause of honor and dignity and has a lively role in the protection and preservation of religion and the people. If it were not for the jihad and spiritual struggle, religion and its beliefs would have been exterminated because materialists and opportunists, in order to attain their worldly desires, do not .relinquish their hostility and fight against religion

The spiritual wars of the saints [awliya’] of Allah have been the reason why religion has remained preserved from their danger and we are benefiting from the fruits of those wars today. It is for this reason that the ways of life of the holy soldiers and .fighters shine and they have been the object of Allah’s mercy and grace

:With regard to them, Allah states

لاَ يَسْتَوِى الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنْ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُوْلى الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِى سَبِيلِ اللهِ بِأَمْوالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ اللهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً...

The holders back from among the believers, not having any injury [or valid excuse],“ and those who strive in Allah’s way with their property and their persons are not equal, Allah has made the strivers with their property and their persons to excel the

(holders back a high degree..."(1)

The point which has been emphasized by the Noble Prophet (S) is that what comes out of the mouth cannot come out of the other limbs and organs of the body and what is built by the tongue is higher than what is built

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1- Surat al-Nisa ۴:۹۵.

by prayer, fasting and the jihad, whether what is uttered by the tongue is in the form of enjoining the right and forbidding the evil as has been mentioned in the hadiths that forbidding the evil and enjoining the right is higher than the holy jihad, or is in the form of teaching and educating others; because guiding an ignorant man towards right is higher than any other spiritual striving [jihad].

Likewise, they make us understand that performing recommendable works not only discharging time-consuming and long acts of worship but light recommendable works can be fulfilled by the tongue too without expending a lot of capital, effort and time. Therefore, the value of the tongue ought to be known and protected from pollution and contamination so that man's works are not performed in vain.

The Differences of Believers in Their Enjoying the Different Levels of Paradise

With regard to the different levels of the Garden of eternal bliss, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! The distance between the different levels of paradise is like that between the earth and the sky. A dweller of paradise looks above himself and then his eyes meet with a ray of light so bright that it makes him blind, and he asks what light that is. It will be said to him that this is the light of your brother so and so. He will protest that we all used to perform worthy works with brother so and so, why has he been accorded superiority over me? It will be said to him that brother

so and so had superiority over you in performing good works. Then, contentment will ".be placed in his heart and he will become pleased with his station

It is surprising that they do not tell that dweller of paradise that your brother's works were more than yours, but tell him that his works were better; that is to say, the quality of his works was higher and he used to have an attentive heart during his acts of devotion and prayer and sincerity. It is natural that man ought to regret when he sees his friends taking precedence over him. If man lags behind the others in the world, he can manage to make up for his lagging behind, but there is no opportunity for compensation and discharging duties in the hereafter, that is why punishment and regret in the hereafter is more regretful than anything else, but despite that there is a ground for regret in the dwellers of the Garden of eternal bliss, Allah does not let them .get afflicted by remorse. This is a well-kept secret whose explanation is difficult for us

Now the question which arises is how come the dwellers of paradise do not get afflicted by remorse despite seeing their friends taking precedence over them? In this regard, a metaphor has been narrated from the Prophet Jesus (S) in the Gospel of Barnabas that he stated, "In this world no short man desires to wear long clothes and no tall man desires to wear short

".clothes

It can be gathered from this simile that every one in the Garden of eternal bliss gets contented with what they have earned and do not expect more than their stations and in reality perceive the rank that they have attained as befitting to them. When he sees a number of people, like the prophets (S), residing in a higher station than his, he conceives their rank as befitting to them and perceives their station as a long wide .dress for his stature

The dwellers of paradise get freed from ugliness and filth before their death and in the limbo [barzakh], and attain the perfection that they rightfully deserve. It is for this reason that every person gets contented with what they have earned and Allah

.grants him peaceful contentment

(Lesson 11: The Importance and Role of Fear and Sorrow (1

point

This section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advices is related to fear and sorrow. It seems that the relationship between this section and the previous sections lies in the fact that once man has planned to devote his life to worship and servitude of Allah, which is that same real perfection, he needs means and tools which can help him prepare .better for his movement towards perfection

In order for decision and will power to appear in man, special pre-requisites and basics have to be fulfilled. (In man's soul conception and affirmations and spiritual states like feelings and emotions prepare the ground for will power and decision.) Therefore, if those pre-requisites are properly used once they are met, or

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after their being fulfilled, a suitable opportunity for man's advancement towards .perfection is said to have been made available

All too often, man desires something but mere desiring does not cause him to resolve to take action, but sometimes spiritual states appear which impel him to take action and advancement; in reality, these spiritual states bring valuable opportunities into .appearance

Fear and Sorrow and Abstinence from Sin

One of the spiritual states which impels man to take action and becomes a strong incentive for abstaining from sin is fear and sorrow. The two greatly help man to come to himself, make the most of his time and not use it in pursuit of vain and futile activities. Of course, not every kind of fear and sorrow is praiseworthy and motivates man to search and work. Sorrow which causes man to get affected by dejection and to quit everything leaving him with neither the vigor to worship nor the energy to work is blameworthy and likewise fear which causes the termination of man's hope and

leads to despondency in such a way that man too gets pessimistic about himself is .blameworthy

Not only do some of the fears and sorrows not inspire man to spiritual journeying to Allah but become its hindrances and impediments, like the fears and sorrows which occur with regard to the world; one loses an amount of money and they are ever after gloomy and sorrowful as to the cause of their loss. Even in prayer one is thinking about that lost money! Or

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fear which one has with regard to losing his property and opportunities; man fears that he will lose his post and position. These kinds of fears and sorrows become a .hindrance in spiritual wayfaring to Allah

Of course, sometimes it occurs that sorrow with regard to issues of the world is related to Allah, like when an affliction befalls man and they fear that it might be divine requital. It is natural that this kind of fear and dread will become a source of motion for them. Or one becomes heartbroken at losing some [worldly] favors and a cause of their awakening that they ought not to fall in love with the world. Therefore, it is likely that fear of losing worldly blessings can indirectly motivate man to motion in .the direction of eschatological and spiritual perfection

Allah, the Exalted, states in two verses that once We send prophets ('a) to the people, :We afflict them with hardships and adversities

وَمَا اَرْسَلْنَا فی قَرْیَهٍ مِنْ نَبِیٍّ اِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ یَضَّرَّعُونَ

And We did not send a prophet in a town but We overtook its people with distress" (and affliction in order that they might humble themselves."(۱

:And in another verse, Allah states

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلی أُمَمٍ مِنْ قَبْلِکَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ یَتَضَرَّعُونَ

And certainly We sent apostles to nations before you, then We seized them with"

distress and affliction in order that they might humble themselves."(2)

It is because of His grace for them that Allah afflicts His slaves with

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1- Surat al-A'raf 7:94.

2- Surat al-An'am 6:42.

hardships and problems in order for it to become a cause of alertness and vigilance for them and awakening from heedlessness so as to acquire more preparedness for accepting right. Because until man is intoxicated with pleasure and elation and drowned in prosperity, he lacks the preparedness to accept right and what is related to the hereafter.

Fear and Sorrow and the Spiritual Ascension and Growth of Man

It has been said that fear and dread with regard to matters of the hereafter causes spiritual ascendance, perfection and prosperity. In this regard, Allah states:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَى * فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى

"And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids the soul from low desires; then surely the Garden—that is the abode."(1)

With regard to the role of piety in keeping man away from sins and fear of Allah, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"O creatures of Allah! Certainly fear of Allah has saved the lovers of Allah from unlawful items gave His dread to their hearts till their nights are passed in wakefulness and their days in thirst."(2)

Elsewhere, Imam 'Ali ('a) introduces fear of Allah as a sign of good opinion with regard to Allah:

"The most fearful of Allah is the one who holds good thoughts about him."(3)

The Difference between Fear and Sorrow

point

Sorrow occurs in circumstances once favor has been divested of man or when harm is directed at him and causes grief and contrition. It is natural that this condition is related to a matter which happened in the past; for instance, man has

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.Surat al-Nazi'at ۷۹:۴۰-۴۱ -۱
.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۳۵۳, sermon [khutbah] ۱۱۳, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۲
.Ibid., p. ۸۸۷ -۳

done an indecent action which resulted in bad effects, one has said bad words which resulted in the disgrace and defamation of someone else and is remorseful as a result of it. Or, he had capital from which he could have benefited enormously but has lost it. In any case, sorrow and grief overtake man once he loses opportunities or he is .deprived of blessings and/or calamities befall him

Fear occurs with regard to the occurrences and matters which will occur in the future: he fears that an ordeal will befall him, an affliction or misfortune will be directed at him, and/or a blessing will be taken away from him. In reality, fear and sorrow are two similar qualities of the soul whose adjuncts are different; one is related to the past .and the other is connected to future

For the reason that danger always exists in this world, the being of fear in man is natural because man is an entity that is prone to injury, and there is always the .possibility of his health, life and ease and security falling in danger

The difference between a believer and a unbeliever lies in the fact that the believer does not have an autonomous opinion about the common causes [or ordinary means] and believes that everything springs from Allah, for this reason he fears Allah but a nonbeliever does not conceive Allah, someone in whose hands all the sovereignty lies, and maintains that there are autonomous common causes [or ordinary

means]. Of course, in the same way which the believer fears Allah because of conceiving all the authority in Him, it is only in Allah that he puts his faith for the reason .that he does not believe in an intermediary role other than Allah

:It has been recorded in a hadith that

Allah subdues the others for a person who is Allah-fearing and He fills with fear“ (everyone who is not afraid of Him.”(۱

Once a believer has gathered that all the means lie in Allah’s hands and all the sovereignty of the world belongs to Him, he does not perceive any autonomy for others save Allah but only reveres Allah because he has been relying on Allah and fears only Him and day by day his faith gets increased and in the end Allah grants him so much power that he fears none save Allah and the others get overcome by him. He is inflexible in the face of falsehood and discharges whatever obligation he has diagnosed. But people do not fear someone who does not venerate Allah and they compromise with other people in order to safeguard their position and try to gratify .others

The natural disposition of man is such that whenever he is happy and overjoyed with the world and is busy with himself, he lags behind in paying attention to Allah and spiritual matters. It is for this reason that in the Qur’an this drunken ecstasy is :castigated

وَلَئِنْ أَذَقْنَاهُ نَعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرّآءَ مَسَّتْهُ لَيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّأَتُ عَنِّی

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۹, p. ۴۰۶ -۱

إِنَّهُ لَفَرَحٌ فَخُورٌ

And if We make him taste favor after distress has afflicted him, he will certainly say,“

"The evils are gone away from me. Most surely, he is exulting, boasting."(1)

Castigating the world, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"… What is your condition? You feel satisfied with what little you have secured from this world while much of the next world of which you have been deprived does not grieve you. The little of this world which you lose pains you so much so that it becomes apparent in your faces, and in the lack of endurance over whatever is taken away from you; as if this world is your permanent abode, and as though its wealth would stay with you for good."(2)

Opposite to this merrymaking and joyousness is sorrow and sadness about the past and dread in regard to the future which make man inclined towards obedience, worship and devotion to Allah. It is for this reason that these two psychological mentalities and emotions have been hailed, as the import of some of the traditions impart [to us] that Allah grants favor upon a community amongst whom there is a sorrowful man. Essentially, people who used to derive benefit from the directions and the divine invitations of the prophets ('a) and saints [awliya'] of Allah were people who held fear of Allah in their hearts.

... إِنَّمَا تُنْذِرُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلوةَ ...

"You warn only those who fear their Lord in secret and keep up prayer…"(3)

The invitation and

١- Surat Hud ١١:١٠.

٢- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٣٥٠, sermon [khutbah] ١١١, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

٣- Surat Fatir ٣٥:١٨.

instruction of the Prophets (S) are ineffective in people who do not fear Allah, as Allah states:

... سَوآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنْذِرْهُمْ لا يُؤْمِنُونَ

Surely those who disbelieve, it being alike to them whether you warn them, or do not" warn them, will not believe."(١)

The notion of fear of Allah

Man fears something which harms and poses danger for him. Now what is the purport of fear of Allah, the Merciful, who does not intend to harm His slaves? It can be said, in general, that in reality man's fear springs from danger that will be directed at him and contingently of someone who will direct that harm at him. When man fears his enemy, it is basically his foe's torture and injury which he fears and his fear of his adversary is by accident.

From the material aspect, when man believes that control of the cosmos and its causes lies in Allah's hands, his fear of Allah denotes apprehension of nature's wrath and worldly calamities because he knows that once he becomes an object of Allah's anger, nature and its material causes will be wrathful to him and consequently earthquakes and floods and the rest of the heavenly and earthly tribulations will be directed at him for the reason that nature's anger is derived from the wrath of Allah.

It can be gathered from the Noble Prophet's (S) sayings in this section of the hadith that sorrow and fear are desirable once its domain develops from volitional premises and reflection and meditation and

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١- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٦.

later on stimulate man to move along the path of Allah and perfection; not that every fear and sorrow ought to be desirable.

Grief and sorrows which crush man [by destroying his self-confidence and vigor] and impedes him from working and living is not desirable. It occupies him when he wants to study, and during prayer the worries of this world hinder him from being absorbed

with Allah. These [kinds of] sorrows and woes are not only undesirable but are .robbers

Some people who are cowards lose their peace of mind and ease if they perceive a possibility that danger will be directed at them, even if that likelihood is meager. This kind of fear is worthless. Fear and sorrow has value when it leads to man's spiritual progression. With these expositions, the connection between fear and sorrow and obedience and devotional servitude to Allah becomes obvious and that all too often man derives the best benefit from these two states in order to attain his perfection .and bliss

The World Is a Prison for a Believer and Paradise for an Infidel

For the purpose of bringing about the conditions for fear and sorrow and clarifying :these two, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! The world is prison for a believer and paradise for an infidel, no believer" ".turns his night into morning save with grief

Once this feeling that he is in prison has been enlivened in man, he does not anticipate merrymaking [in this world] and does not think about being preoccupied with the pleasures of this world. He [only] derives benefit from the

p: ۱۳۴

blessings of this world to the degree of gaining enough ability for spiritual journeying. He thanks Allah after deriving benefit from every blessing and attaining every .gratification

In contrast [to the believer], the world is paradise for an unbeliever, because he can strive to attain his comfort and satisfaction as long as he is in this world and if luxury and pleasure ever occur for him, it is in this world and he will be entangled in the requital of Allah on the Day of Resurrection for the ugly works which he perpetrated in this world. The punishment and wrath of Allah is so intense that the world, in spite of !all its problems, is [still] paradise for him

There is a famous narrative that a poor and sickly Jew approached Imam al-Hasan ('a), who was dressed in costly clothes and mounted on a horse, and said, "Your grandfather stated that the world is a jail for a believer and a heaven for a nonbeliever. Now for who is the world a paradise, for you who are mounted on a horse with magnificence and glory, or for me who is poor and sick? With all the ’!encumbrances and hardships, the world is hell for me, not paradise

Imam al-Hasan ('a) stated, "If you knew what hard punishment Allah has in store for you, you would understand that the world, in this same state that you are, is paradise. In contrast, if you would perceive what stations Allah has kept in store

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for us, you would understand that [even] if the whole world were given to us, it would ".be nothing more than prison

Once the world is a jail for a believer, it is natural that he is sorrowful because prison is .not a place of joyousness

It is worthy of mention that commendation of sorrow in this hadith does not imply that every sorrow is praiseworthy and that man has to try to be sad all the time. It is not feasible to deduce such a general and common connotation [from the above statements in regard to sorrow]. It is doubtless that every point which is mentioned in such kind of admonitions is restricted and its scope is limited; but with the help of research and acquaintance with the words of Allah and of the Infallible Imams ('a), one ralizes that in what instances comprehensive and general judgments become .limited

Meditation about Hell Is a Cause of Fear and Sorrow for a Believer

:In connection to the reasons for a believer's sorrow, the Noble Prophet (S) states

With regard to the fact that Allah has given the news that he will cast man into hell" and has not promised him to release him from there, why ought not a believer to be "?sorrowful

One of the causes of fear and sorrow in man, especially a believer, is contemplation about the unequivocal promise of Allah that all people will enter hell and in this connection the Noble Prophet (S) prepares the ground for sorrow by mentioning this .point

:In this regard, Allah states

وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ اِلاَّ وَارِدُهَا كَانَ عَلَى

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رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا مَقْضِيًّا

And there is none of you but shall come to it, this is an unavoidable decree of your" (Lord."(١

A believer has faith in the Qur'an and the explicit judgment of Allah that he will enter heaven and no one has the guarantee of being taken out of hell. Yes, those who are an object of Allah's grace and favor, and have been successful at discharging Allah's duties, will be released from hell but they do not know whether they belong to that group or not. This very thought is enough for them [to become fearful and sorrowful]. He does not know what his fate will be; for this reason joyousness and happiness are .meaningless to him and this thought and sorrow restrains him from heedlessness

This apprehension and anxiety prompts man to come to themselves and desert merrymaking and partying and ponder about his destination. Of course, there are also other causes and factors in the world which result in man's sorrow and sadness, like being affected by illnesses and calamities. Or that a man's rights are violated and they :are not able to get justice done; in this connection, the Noble Prophet (S) states

A believing man is confronted with illnesses, encumbrances, unforeseen hardships" and oppression, but no one helps him. For this reason, he asks Allah, the Exalted, for ".help and reward and compensation

Even if the causes and factors which give rise to sorrow are countless, some sorrow

which arises from some of them is

.Surat Maryam ۱۹:۷۱ -۱

not so worthwhile and plays no role in a believer's self-building and edification of character because these kinds of woes also come to pass for others. Sorrow and grief is very desirable when it arises from a believer's knowledge that he is likely not to be .released from hell once he enters it

:In continuation, the Prophet (S) states

A believer departs from the world in a sorrowful state, but he is led towards the ease" ".and grace of Allah once he departs

As has been said, until a believer is in this world, he is faced with worries and woes as a result of which he gets sad and grieves and/or gets despondent when he thinks about his pre-destination and looks at the shortcomings of his past. Therefore, that time when he leaves this world which is entirely filled with encumbrances and sorrow towards the eternal world and the proximity of right is when his sadness and sorrow .comes to an end and that's when he gets happy and joyous

".O Abu Dharr! Allah has not been worshiped in the same way as prolonged sorrow"

A slave who is always afraid of Allah and has been patient in the face of hardships has .been more devoted to Allah than everyone else

It is natural that once man was fearful and sorrowful with regard to his destination, he supplicates and prays to the Divine Threshold and consequently he cleanses his inside of impurities and sin. Likewise, he engages in more worthy worship accompanied

by more wakefulness and vigilance and purity of heart is a precondition for the acceptance of prayer. Therefore, sorrow and grief is itself worship because it makes

.man attentive to his position of servitude and the greatness of his Lord

Now that the discussion has come this far, there is room for us to cite some hadiths regarding the state and station of a believer at the time of his death and meeting Allah, the Merciful. It has been recorded in a hadith that at the time of a believer's :death, two angels say to him

O friend of Allah! Do not be sorrowful or fearful and receive the glad tidings of" paradise and rejoice. Fear and sorrow will not affect you and you are not deserving of that. Verily Allah, the Exalted, has willed to free you from every pain and punishment and make you partake of the sweetness of Allah's mercy. Verily, hell is closed over (you and you will never enter hell at all."(١

;Imam 'Ali ('a) states

My friend and brother, the Prophet of Allah, said to me, 'A person who is happily" looking forward to meeting Allah and not to be rejected by Him ought to choose you to be his guardian and a person who gets happily anxious to meet Allah and for Allah to be pleased by him should love your son al-Hasan, and a person who is gladly looking (forward to meeting Allah without being fearful must love your son al-Husayn."(٢

(Lesson ١٢: The Importance and Role of Fear and Sorrow (٢

point

The greatest blessing

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٨, p. ٢١, hadith ٢٠٥ -١

.Ibid., vol. ٢٧, p. ١٠٧, hadith ٨١ -٢

which Allah has granted to us is the gift of Islam and the guardianship of the Ahl al-bayt ('a). Under the auspices of the guidelines and directives of that Pure Household, colossal treasures of their advices and knowledge have been transmitted to us with the help of the strenuous efforts of the great scholars over the past fourteen

centuries. The least gratitude we can express concerning this great favor is study and research of these invaluable hoards of knowledge and making practicable use of them and increasing awareness of them. It is under the auspices of the guardianship of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and their directives that we get led from the darkness of ignorance and unawareness to the light of knowledge and awareness; as we read in the Jami'ah Supplication:

"Thanks to your leadership and custodianship, Allah made us know the knowledge and truths of the religion and set right our corrupt worldly affairs..."(1)

The luminous advices of the Noble Prophet (S) are a clear example of their instructions. There is room for us to derive benefit from these advices and recommendations in order to attain the prosperity of this world and the hereafter because Islam and its instructions are the best prescription that secures man's worldly and eschatological prosperity and all his material and psychological needs.

Beneficial and Valuable Knowledge

"O Abu Dharr! Whoever imparts knowledge which does not cause weeping has passed on fruitless knowledge, because Allah has thus described the scholars in the Qur'an, 'Surely, those who are given the knowledge before it

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۱- Mafatih al-Jinan, p. ۱۰۹, the Islamic Culture Propagation Publications.

fall down on their faces, making obeisance when it is recited them.'"

Islam is a comprehensive and complete school of thought which, by inviting man to perfection, aims at training and instructing him in social and ethical aspects and other prospects. Man attains perfection once he counterbalances all the academic, ethical and evaluative aspects and angles. Islam grants the same value to ethical and spiritual issues to the same extent that it grants to knowledge, expertise, independent reasoning and Islamic jurisprudence and law and a perfect man thrives for growth in the academic and jurisprudential aspects as much as he flourishes in the ethical

.aspects, too

Unfortunately, sometimes attending to academic issues prevents us from paying heed to ethical issues, whose worth is not less than that of academic matters. In the same way that attending to social issues makes man heedless of spiritual and ethical issues. Man gets so immersed in social and official duties that he does not find an opportunity to engage in himself and probe into his ethical needs. In order for us not to get proud and heedless, sometimes it is necessary to pay heed to ethical and .spiritual issues, too

This section of the hadiths depends on this point that if Allah has granted us knowledge, He wants us to pay heed to ethical matters too because if we only attend to academic issues and get negligent of ourselves, we will get afflicted by ethical .deviations such as laxity and egotism

Some values have been

p: ۱۴۱

mentioned in the Qur'an which unfortunately have been forgotten in our society [today], even though some people pay heed to them, but still it is not to the extent of these values finding their way to the social scene. This is in spite of the fact that the Qur'an believes those qualities and values to be attributes of devoted worshippers and the scholars. One of those attributes and qualities is fear of Allah and the state of .supplication and lamentation

Perhaps the reason for stressing the quality of sorrow and grief and humility is for the reason of setting the personality of a believer in equilibrium, especially an intellectual, because knowledge and awareness have a high station and are the most eminent values for man after piety. It is natural that the one who has attained knowledge becomes honored and respected in society and this itself gives birth to pride and .vanity and naturally the academic is faced with the danger of corruption

The divine law [shar'] of Islam, in order to obstruct the scholar from egotism and self-

importance and setting his personality balance, recommends him to humility, yielding before Allah and weeping and wailing, so that the higher he rises in social position, the smaller and humbler he perceives himself. This is the same thing that Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) requests from Allah on noble moral traits and acts pleasing to Allah:

“O Allah! Bless Muhammad and his Household, raise me not a single degree before the people without lowering me

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to the same extent in myself and bring about no outward exaltation for me without an inward abasement in myself to the same measure…”(۱)

With regard to what has been cited, the Prophet (S) states to Abu Dharr that if your knowledge does not give rise to humility and modesty and does not bring forth crying in you, know that that knowledge is not beneficial to you. Knowledge is beneficial and rewarding which adds to man’s yielding before his Lord. As Allah describes the intellectuals in the Qur’an that when the divine verses are recited to them, they at once fall prostrating on the ground and make humble entreaties and supplications [to their Lord]. This is a sign of man’s submissiveness to Allah.

Even if it is considered an outward act but still it arises from the transformation of the heart and inside; until man’s heart has not become sorrowful and man has not become humble in his heart, the state of crying does not come about in man.

In continuation of the hadith, the Prophet (S) states:

“O Abu Dharr! Every person can make himself cry because of fear of Allah and not every person can make his hearts acquainted with sorrow and force himself to cry because a hard heart is far from Allah; but they do not perceive this denotation.”

As has previously been mentioned, the crying which has been recommended in the hadiths, one of which is this hadith, is weeping as a result of fear of being deprived

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.Mafatih al-Jinan, Du‘a’ Makarim al-Akhlaq -١

of the prosperity of the hereafter and getting polluted by sin and/or lamenting because of spiritual deprivations and due to the absence of the Imam of the Age—may Allah hasten his reappearance—and higher than all these is lamentation because of deprivation from the beatific vision of Allah [liqa’ Allah].

Those who are lovers of Allah and cognition of the divine guardianship weep as a result of fear of being deprived of the beatific meeting with Allah, in the same way that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) states in Du‘a’ al-Kumayl:

“I am at crossroads O my Allah O my Master! I could bear your fire with patience, but how can I bear separation from Thee!”

If it is not possible for someone to cry, then at least one ought to inculcate his hearts with topics that cause sorrow and/or meditate upon his spiritual privations and reflect upon his sins in order to make his hearts grieved. If his heart still does not become sorrowful, then he ought to at least dissemble to be anguished. If sadness does not occur for someone and he was always overjoyed and pompous, he gets deprived of Allah’s mercy.

Of course, it is to be taken for granted that every person who has a state of weeping and wailing is close to Allah, because it is also possible for the hypocrites to attain this state as a result of causing and maintaining certain feelings in themselves in order to quickly become sad and start crying. Opposed to that, it

cannot be asserted that whoever does not get sad and does not cry is stone-hearted and far from Allah.

Security and Peace in Paradise Are a Product of Fear and Dread of Allah in the World

“O Abu Dharr! Allah states, ‘I do not mix two fears and also two securities in [any] one of my slaves. If he were secure in this world, I will scare him in the next world. If he

were afraid of me in this world, I will make him secure in the next world.'"

Being secure from divine machinations is a cause of becoming polluted by sin because once man perceives himself at liberty to do whatever he fancies and has no fear and apprehension whatsoever, he has no qualms about committing sin. It is natural that feeling safe in the world—which causes being polluted by deviations and sin—goes with insecurity and punishment; in this regard Allah states:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَى * واثَرَ الْحَيَوةَ الدُّنْيا * فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِىَ الْمَأوَى

"Then as for him who is inordinate, and prefers the life of this world, then surely the hell, that is the abode."(1)

The Prophet's (S) remark in this section is expressive of the fact that man can do something to bring about fear of Allah in his heart. After man has comprehended that fear of Allah is desirable and results in the attainment of the hereafter, the question arises as to how it is possible to cause fear and dread in oneself? In response to this question, it can be said that this state arises in man by making some of the necessary preparations

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۱- Surat al-Nazi'at ۷۹:۳۷-۳۹.

and paying heed to some of the issues:

Sometimes man knows certain things but because they do not pay heed to those known facts, his faith and knowledge are dormant and faint-colored and an individual becomes negligent and in the end that knowledge and belief does not produce its effects. But every time a person pays heed to the causes giving birth to fear and whenever he tries to pay attention to that fear, his fear and dread increase and affect his behavior.

The other point is that man can attain a position where he concurrently combines sorrows and raptures. Weak people cannot have sorrow and happiness at the same

time. They have either happiness and delight or sorrow at a time. Once the soul gets stronger and more perfect, it is possible that at one time, he becomes happy from one point of view and from the other perspective gets sad and sorrowful, and bit by bit attains a level where as a result of the perfection of the heart and soul, he muster in himself kinds of sorrows and raptures in the same way that the saints [awliya'] of Allah used to gather in themselves different kinds of fears and sorrows and raptures and hopes. People who have achieved those stations have different spiritual states simultaneously and can manage to produce the different effects and conditions in .themselves

The Forgiveness of Sins Is a Result of Fear of Allah

:In connection with the fruits of fear of Allah, the Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! On the Day of Resurrection, the sins"

p: ۱۴۶

of a believing slave will be shown, he will say, 'I was scared of the consequences of ".this action.' As a result of this, his sins will get forgiven

We have so far understood the importance of fear of Allah and have known its role in giving aid to man in his journeying towards Allah. In regard to this matter the Prophet (S) hints at some of the benefits and profits of fearing Allah in order to produce or strengthen in us the motivation of bringing about fear. He states that one of the .benefits of fear of Allah is forgiveness and remission of sins

:In general, every individual can have two conditions

At the time of committing sin, he had no fear of the consequences of his action, and .۱ enjoyed deriving gratification from his sins in relaxation and peace of mind and without any worry and anxiety. Such a condition results in being encouraged to sin more and as a result adamant persistence at perpetrating that sin and the end result .is the bad end for man

At the moment of perpetrating sin, he is fearful of Allah and his end and destination. .۲ He fears to die before succeeding at repentance. This fear and dread causes a decrease of pleasure at the time of committing sin and consequently leads to .repentance and the forgiveness of sins

It is natural that on the Day of Resurrection, man will be held accountable for his sins, and if that sin has not been compensated

for and amended, and has not even been repented for, because if he had repented he would have been forgiven, he will be led towards hell. But because Allah's slave was fearful and dreadful in the world, they say: "O Lord! I was scared of the consequences of my sin at the time of committing sin." As a result of this, their sin will be forgiven. Therefore, if man is afraid of Allah with regard to his sin, the hope is that he will be .forgiven on the Day of Resurrection

Fear of Allah causes a reduction of sin and man's wakefulness and vigilance and is itself a cause of warning against negligence in man at the time of deviation and error. It is for this reason that the fearful and dreadful of Allah have been praised and a .promise of reward has been promised for fear of Allah

With one brief overview at the verses of the Qur'an, we arrive at this conclusion that the differences of the levels of fear are related to the levels of man's knowledge and cognition; that is to say, wise people, amongst them the Infallible Imams ('a), have a higher level of fear of Allah and the rest of the people are at a lower level. The Qur'an :recites two adjuncts for fear and dread

.Fear of the presence of Allah .۱

.Fear of divine punishment .۲

:In Surat Ibrahim, Allah states

لَنُسْكِنَنَّكُم الأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ذَلِکَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِی وَخَافَ وَعِيدِ

And most surely, We will“

settle you in the land after them; this is for him who fears standing in My presence (and who fears My threat.”(۱

In this verse, both fear of Allah and dread of divine punishment have been mentioned. .The highest position of fear is fear of Allah’s presence

The deceased ‘Allamah Tabataba’i states, “Fear of Allah denotes dread of Allah’s punishment that results from unbelief and sin and its requisite is that man’s acts of worship have been performed for release from divine retribution, not worship solely for Allah. This is the worship of slaves who devote themselves to their Master as a .result of fear of punishment

Likewise, some people devote themselves to Allah out of desire for divine reward and payment, and this kind of worship has acquired the name ‘worship of the traders’. But fear of the divine presence is other than fear of divine retribution. This fear arises from a feeling of smallness and abjectness in the face of Allah’s greatness and His divine realm, and is a fruit of humility and lowliness in the face of the honor and .sovereignty of Allah

In reality, worship and servitude is [done] as a result of fear of the divine presence“ and with the denotation of humility and homage, not because of fear of divine retribution and/or as a result of coveting divine reward and payment, and this sincere worship only takes place for Allah. Therefore, people who fear the divine presence of Allah are the purified and fearful in

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.Surat Ibrahim ۱۴:۱۴ -۱

(the face of the majesty of Allah.”(۱

The Noble Prophet (S) reproaches a person who performs sin because of being confident of his good works, and states:

"O Abu Dharr! A man performs good works and by putting his confidence in it, commits sins and perceives sin as light in comparison to his good works, such a person gets agitated when he goes to the divine presence of Allah. Opposite to him is a man who commits sin and is fearful and dreadful of divine retribution, such a person will have a free conscience on the Day of Resurrection."

The criteria of acceptance or lack of acceptance of works cannot be measured by outward criteria but acceptance and lack of acceptance of works is connected to conditions which all too often man does not manage to compute.

Therefore, no one can be sure of the approval of his works. In addition to that, surety of the acceptance of acts of worship gives birth to self-conceit in man, to the extent that it is possible to contaminate himself with venial sins vis-à-vis the good works which he has committed on the pretext that minor sins are nothing in comparison to the good works which he has discharged heedless of the fact that firstly confidence in the approval of his acts of devotion was misplaced, because oftentimes his works might not be accepted, secondly not paying heed to venial sins is itself an unpardonable sin. That man feels safe and assured as a result

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۱- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۹, p. ۱۲۲.

of reliance on the good works he has performed and perceives sin to be small and considers it as unimportant as a result of depending on his acts of devotion is enough to make man an object of Allah's wrath.

In contrast to this group, some people are fearful and anxious and always worried once they commit sin. This group, even if they do not have a lot of will power to discharge some of the acts of worship, will be freed from the divine retribution of Allah

because of their fear and dread in regard to sin, and will be in peace and security there. (The Noble Prophet's (S) expression in this section has another interpretation which has previous been mentioned.)

The Noble Prophet's (S) intention is to direct Abu Dharr's attention to the importance of the spiritual states of the heart and how effective fear of sin is, to the extent that once man commits sin, anxiety, worry and distress of the heart will result in his forgiveness and remission. Opposite to this, even if he performs a lot of acts of worship but feels secure and safe from the repercussions of venial sins, which is proof that he has regarded sin as light and pays no heed to Who he is disobeying, he will be afflicted by divine wrath. Therefore, no sin ought to be considered as minor [or pardonable] and always make effort to preserve in ourselves fear and dread of Allah so as not to become

self-conceited and deceived by the accursed Devil.

The Role of Paying Heed to Sin in Shunning the Devil

Higher than what has been said, the Noble Prophet (S) states in the next sentence:

"O Abu Dharr! Allah's slave commits sin and as a result of that [sin] goes to heaven." I said, "O Prophet of Allah! May my father and mother be thy ransom! How possible is that?" He stated, "He always perceives his sin and repents it, seeks refuge in Allah until finally he enters paradise."

Sometimes, man commits sin and as a result of that is anxious and worried and this very fear and dread gives rise to repentance and seeking refuge in Allah and release from the trap of the accursed Devil. Consequently, once he gets freed from negligence and cravings of the flesh, he no longer perpetrates sin and as a result of this enters the Garden of eternal bliss. Perhaps, if that sin were not committed by him, this feeling would not have been aroused in him. Of course, the proximate [or immediate] cause of paying heed to Allah and fleeing from the accursed Devil is that same repentance, fear and dread of Allah and sin is a remote [or distant] cause but at

.any rate that too has become a factor

This statement of the Prophet (S) is intended to encourage man to [pay heed] to this point that they ought to arouse in their souls a feeling of fear and dread. Fear which results in compensating for past sins and makes the individual who enters the Garden

p: ۱۵۲

.of bliss not of meager value, therefore we ought to strive to attain it

A Study of the Nature of Fear and Sorrow and the Meaning of Fear of Allah

point

Up to this section, the discussion has been connected to fear and dread which has been cited in the hadiths. Now is the time to present some questions and their :responses even if these queries are not directly related to this ethical discussion

One of the questions pertains to whether having the condition [or state] of fear is good or bad? If it is good, then why does Allah describe his saints [awliya'] as 'and there is no fear for him nor shall he grieve'(۱)? And if it is bad, then why does the Noble Prophet (S) encourage others to give rise to this feeling in their hearts? And also why ?has he stated that these two are a cause of forgiveness and remission of sins

Two responses ought to be given, fear and sorrow are not in themselves, without taking into consideration their two adjuncts [or attachments], desirable or reproachable. It cannot be said with generality that they are either good or bad, but the cause of that fear and the cause of that sorrow have to be taken into .consideration

Fear of Allah and His retribution is desirable, because it results in man standing up to perform acts of worship and obedience of Allah and abstinence from sins and in the end it helps man to better discharge his duties and with the acquisition of the path to prosperity and bliss, become a dweller of

p: ۱۵۳

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۱۲ -۱

the Garden of eternal bliss. Opposite to it is undesirable fear as a result of the world, for the reason that the origin [or roots] of inclination to the world is not good, worse .with fear of it. The other query concerns what the interpretation of fear of Allah is

In response it ought to be said that fear of Allah is a reflection of dread of ourselves and the actions which man has committed, otherwise Allah is the source of mercy and compassion. Fear of Allah is because of His being 'the One who inflicts intense punishment' [shadid al-'iqab], He does not overlook man's actions and He keeps count .of every deed

The other point whose mentioning is necessary is that in one general division, three :kinds of fear of Allah can be cited

Fear of Divine Retribution In Hell (۱

This is the level of ordinary people. In most people dread of the eternal inferno and divine retribution causes them to discharge their religious duties and not stain themselves with sin. Of course, it ought to be mentioned that this stage is very valuable for those who are at the beginning of growth and perfection and this fear gives fruit to prosperity and freedom from divine punishment if it is effective in .making man abstain from sin

Fear of Losing The Gifts Of Paradise (۲

Some people refrain from sin and discharge their religious obligations as a result of fearing to be deprived of the blessings of the eternal blissful Garden, in reality their longing for the Garden of eternal bliss impels them to obey

p: ۱۵۴

.Allah and shun the Devil. This level is higher than the previous one

[Fear Of Being Deprived Of The Beatific Presence And Vision Of Allah [Liqa' Allah (۳

This is fear of losing the attention and affection of Allah. There is no doubt that this level is higher than the previous two levels and is especially reserved for the elect ones of the divine presence and people whose companionship is very high and pay no attention to the reward and retribution of the hereafter; but perceive and pursue .things which are higher

In order to clarify this level and make our minds perceive it, it is necessary to cite an :example

Imagine that we have been invited by the leader of the Islamic revolution and a reception has been arranged for us. It is likely for a number of the people who have been invited to be worried of missing the food once they delay. Some say to themselves that today is a festival and it has been resolved that the leader will offer presents. Their fear is that they will miss the gifts if they arrive late [at the reception]. The ambition of this group is higher than that of the previous one. It is not important whether they remain hungry or not, but what is important is receiving a present from !the hands of the leader

The third group consists of people who only value and cherish visiting the leader and nothing else. That the leader of the Islamic revolution will cast a glance at them and smile out of pleasure and happiness at them

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is very valuable for them and it is no longer necessary for them to be given a coin or .not

These levels of love and affection which exist among the people as a result of the differences in motivation and knowledge are coincidentally similar to fear of the divine .presence

In a hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) cites these three levels in regard to worship and :servitude to Allah, the Exalted, stating

A group of men worship Allah as a result of fear; the worship of this category of"

people is that of slaves. Another party prays to Allah as a result of ardor for divine reward and profit; the worship of this sect is that of wage-takers. And another group venerates Allah as a result of love and adoration for Allah; this is the worship of the free and is the highest worship."(١)

The dread of a person who fears Allah is sometimes apprehension of hell in such a way that if the punishment of hell is gotten rid of, they are no longer worried. Of course, this stage is very worthy in comparison to infidelity and disbelief and is a product of belief in Allah, the Day of Resurrection and faith in the fact that Allah will punish sinful and disobedient servants. The ambition of a person who has achieved this level is low and is like slaves who work as a result of fear of their master's punishment.

Some people's fear of Allah is a result of their foreboding that they will

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١- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٠, p. ٢٣۶.

be deprived of the divine blessings of the eternal Garden of bliss. Even if divine retribution is out of consideration, they apprehend being expropriated of the divine favors of Allah. Vis-à-vis, those two groups are a sect which, even if heaven and hell were not existent, they worry about being the object of indifference and disregard by Allah. The Qur'an mentions Allah's disregard to the disbelievers as one of the greatest divine retributions:

... وَلاَ يُكَلِّمُهُم اللهُ وَلاَ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَهِ...

"... and Allah will not speak to them, nor will He look upon them on the Day of Resurrection..."(١)

For a person who is conscious [and perceptive], Allah's contempt is worse than His retribution. Worse than any punishment for a man is to go visiting his friend, father or teacher after a long period of time only to be confronted by their disregard and

.indifference

A question is asked here that why were the Infallible Imams ('a) also afraid of Allah? They were infallible and the control of heaven and hell was at their disposal, why were ?they afraid of Allah and how compatible is this fear with the station of infallibility

A brief answer is that infallibility connotes quitting sins and abstaining from what is forbidden and that does not mean that the good pleasure of Allah too is allotted to the Infallible. An Infallible is a person who does not sin and does not go to hell, but where is it explicitly stated that he is the object

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.Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۷۷ -۱

of Allah's attention and love? Dread of being expropriated of Allah's grace and His .good pleasure is higher than fear of divine retribution

An elaborate and real response to this query is beyond the reach of our understanding, because we cannot conceive the station of the Prophet's (S) Pure Household and [we cannot] perceive what spiritual states they had and what they .were doing and how their conditions were

Yes, with reliance on the evidence that exists and in comparison with our own states, in brief and to the extent of our comprehension, we perceive a very meager fraction .of their states but the reality of the matter is not apparent to us and is not explicable

The Simultaneous Appearance of Opposing and Conflicting States

With regard to the previous topics, it can be gathered that once man's soul becomes complete, it can have different states simultaneously—such as [concurrent] pleasure .and displeasure

Our capacity is limited and we cannot manage to gather numerous transcendental states at the level of perfection. Therefore, the collection of sorrows and joys gives

rise to a medium and intermediate inner state in us. But once man becomes more perfect, he can cause to appear in himself two or more conflicting spiritual states, .what is more at the level of perfection

Fear and hope, with regard to their special factors, appear in the soul and if the totality of causes are together taken into consideration, it is possible for them to give .rise to a new transcendental state as a result of their actions and reactions

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But if regard is paid to every factor, from the perspective that it is a source and fountainhead of a specific inner state, its only fruit is that very spiritual state. For instance, if we concentrate on the origin of fear, only dread appears in our souls and once we focus on the source of security, the feeling of security and peace appears in .our souls

People whose souls have become complete and are in firm control of their inner states and spiritual conditions become full of tears once they conceive the divine retribution and/or reflect upon the possibility of being deprived of the good pleasure of Allah and at that very moment perceive the grace, mercy and forgiveness of Allah and a state of happiness and joyousness appears in them. That is to say, with regard to the causes of fear and security, it is feasible for them to concurrently emanate two .inner states in themselves

With regard to these issues, it is possible to have a weak awareness and knowledge in relation to the holy existence of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams ('a) in the form of a subtle station 'union of perfections' [jam' al-jam'i] and that those strong souls can synchronically be the manifestation of all the beautiful Names and Attributes of Allah. They pay heed to the mercy of Allah and become happy and joyous .and hope appears in them

On the other hand, they pay heed to the harsh divine retribution and

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punishment, and an inner state of fear and dread appears in them. But in regard to the physical [or bodily] appearance and emergence of spiritual states, whichever gains predominance over the other becomes conspicuous and evident because the body of man lacks the capability of manifesting those two inner states in a complete way. If fear prevails, tears flow and once the feeling of hope and joy predominates, the lips fall into a smile; of course, manifesting these inner states is at their free .disposal

With regard to the question of why the Infallibles paid heed to divine retribution in order to give rise to the inner state of fear in themselves despite that they knew they had not committed any sin and would never at all commit any sin, in addition to that, Allah has placed heaven and hell at their free disposal. Therefore, what motivation do they have for paying heed to the cause of fear? We have previously provided a .response to this query but now we will give another answer

The sum of capabilities and inner states which exist in man ought to be the manifestation of devotional servitude to Allah and to be expended in His way. Man's being is a mixture of material and transcendental elements and states; there is in his natural disposition fear and displeasure and security and pleasure, and joy and .gratification, too

Allah has granted these spiritual and transcendental states to all human beings in order for them to use them along His

path. They ought to be happy and laugh for the good pleasure of Allah; that is to say, his joyousness has to be related to Allah in some way. He ought to be glad for the reason that he has been an object of Allah's mercy not because he is deriving .pleasure [for] himself

It has been narrated in some hadiths that the Shi'ahs will be guests of the Prophet (S) and his Ahl al-bayt ('a) and sit at their table partaking of their food. But still is the gratification which the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) derive the same as that which we derive [from

:it]? It has been recorded in a verse in the Qur’an that

وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ

(And the flesh of fowl such as they desire.”(١“

Is the pleasure which the Noble Prophet derives from the fowls of paradise the same ?as that which we derive

Of course, the two immeasurable pleasures are different. The Noble Prophet (S) derives pleasure from the perspective that it is acceptable to Allah. In any case, the level of derivation of pleasure is related to the standard of knowledge and affection .and love of an individual to Allah

This very contrast can be made in relation to the fear of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) with the dread of the rest [of people]; even if they fear the fire of hell but still their dread emanates from their perception that it is a sign of Allah’s wrath. They perceive it as

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١- Surat al-Waqi‘ah ۵۶:٢١.

a sign that their Beloved has no love for them; Allah’s wrath and separation and parting from Him is unbearable for them, it is for this reason that they are deeply .worried and anxious

Lesson ١٣: The Insignificance and Minuteness of the World and the Importance of Perceiving the Hereafter

The Differences of Perception and Conduct between an Intelligent and an Unintelligent Person

The previous discourse was concerned with the fact that if man commits sin and becomes regretful and fearful afterwards, Allah grants him forgiveness as a result of that regret and anxiety. It is likely to falsely imagine that every person who commits

sin and repents afterwards will be forgiven and this in itself gives birth to more sin and contamination. In order to put an end to this false illusion, the Noble Prophet states that a smart and clever person is one who is always contemplating about the best way of making use of his life and performing commendable works. He tramples the carnal desires of the soul underfoot and does not act according to the dictates of his :appetitive heart, which consequently leads to getting afflicted by negligence

O Abu Dharr! Smart and wise is a man who disciplines his soul and strives for the life“ after death and stupid is a person who follows his soul and its carnal cravings and in ”.spite of that has hope in Allah

Man has an intellect and an appetitive soul; sometimes his intellect is triumphant over his craving soul and at other times the longing heart is victorious over his reason. Both :types have been portrayed in this section

At times, the soul becomes weak and its yearnings

p: ۱۶۲

do not have [any] influence on the intellect. This is in regard to a sagacious man who is on the path of edification of character and unceasingly reflects upon the everlasting life after death. In contrast, from time to time the soul and its carnal desires triumph over reason and man becomes weak in the face of the appetitive soul and cannot .[resist the animal instincts [of the flesh

This interpretation is based on the copy of “Bihar al-Anwar” in which has been recorded “whoever debases his soul”, [man dana nafsah] that is to say wise is a man whose carnal desires have become weak but the other copies have recorded .[“whoever disciplines his soul” [man adabba nafsah

Perhaps, the second expression is better than the first, and in this case the denotation of the sentence will be thus: wise is a person who endeavors to discipline his soul. In other words, a sagacious man undertakes edification of character and does not indulge his soul in its every whim and desire. Such a person can think rationally and

close his eyes to the marginal material world and set them on the infinite horizon and the perpetuity of the final abode and stop them from short-sightedness and limited .perceptions. He discharges his works for the everlasting life after the Resurrection

From the Islamic point of view, this kind of thinking is intelligent and this type of person is clever, because he meditates about the destination and conceives the infinite cosmos of

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the hereafter in place of this finite world. By contrasting the transient pleasures of the world with the permanent blessings of the eternal abode, a sagacious man prefers .the second

Myopic people think of nothing but short-term pleasures and prefer them over the imperishable gratifications of the afterworld. They have handed over the authority of the intellect to the appetitive soul and meekly put themselves at the disposal of the stomach and passion; and in the words of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali :('a)

All too often, the intellect and wisdom are captives and hostages of the carnal soul" (and desires of the flesh which reign over them."(۱)

Such a person follows the appetitive soul and hopes to be companions with the saints ![awliya'] of Allah

Trustworthiness and Humility

point

Previous to this, the discussion was concerned with the two inner qualities of fear and sorrow and that two commendable and desirable transcendental states appear as a result of them but for the reason that some perfections and spiritual sates are likely to :be divested of man, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! The first attribute that will be divested of this ummah (Islamic"

Community) is dependability and humility, to the extent that a humble individual will not be seen."

In this statement, the Noble Prophet (S) has mentioned two eminent ethical qualities. One of those two values is trustworthiness, which is a social ethical attribute, and plays a pivotal role in establishing healthy social relationships and without which it is impossible to found a

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۱- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۸۲, wisdom [hikmat] ۲۰۲, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

sound community, because the bedrock of social relationships is reciprocal trust.

In this section, the Noble Prophet (S) warns Abu Dharr that after his departure, a good and acclaimed attribute will be removed from the Islamic community the highest and first of which is reliability and modesty.

The community of the Noble Prophet of Islam (S), as a well-trained community, had two inimitable distinctions over the rest of the nations; the first quality was concerned with social relationships among themselves and with the other nations. The second characteristic was connected with the spiritual states and morals and the formation of the individual personality of the community. It was outstanding both from the point of view of individual and spiritual personality and from the social perspective. This trait was attained as a result of the prolonged instructions sanctioned by Allah and executed by the Noble Prophet (S).

The Islamic community was like a garden of greenery in blossom and trees bearing fruit in the hands of an illustrious gardener such as the Noble Prophet (S). Now once this garden meets with misfortune, the effects of that calamity will become apparent and it will head towards ruin and extinction.

Instructed by the Noble Prophet (S), a community which was superlative from the aspect of individual and social qualities had been met with catastrophe and the

greenery turned to yellow leaves after the departure of the Noble Prophet (S). The first misfortune to befall the Islamic community was that the people became hard-hearted and

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forfeited humility and tender-heartedness, to the extent that they never submitted to right, and positive and invaluable attributes could never impress themselves upon their hearts. Every one of them was a cold and cruel man whose heart could never be moved by the right word and he never got soft-hearted and tearful where it was .appropriate to do that

The second calamity in connection to their social relations came into being when dependability and right conduct lost their weight; they were not truthful and honest with each other, and used to betray each other. This is a warning bell for the community: once these two individual and social afflictions come to appearance in a .community, that individual and community will be propelled into decline

This value is not confined to Islam and/or the Muslims only. Before the advent of Islam, all the people used to know that truthfulness and trustworthiness are good and .treachery in regard to people's property and possessions is not commendable

a) The Function of Trustworthiness

The greatest factor which rendered the Noble Prophet (S) successful not only among the Arabs, but amidst all the inhabitants of the world, was that he was a trustworthy man [right] before the Prophetic mission. The people used to acknowledge him as a dependable man and used to call him, 'Muhammad the Trustworthy' [Muhammad-i amin]. And this very trait became a cause of the people's inclination to him, because reliability also calls for telling the truth. A man who betrays people with regard to their property cannot tell the

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truth. A lot of people conceded his assertion that he was the Prophet (S) because he

.never used to tell any lies

As has been mentioned previously, a value such as dependability is conceived by the intellect, and if there had not been the prophetic mission and the divine call, the people would still perceive it but Islam endorsed this command of the intellect and :stated

إِنَّ اللهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الاَمَانَاتِ إِلَى أَهْلِهَا...

)Surely, Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners..."(1)"

Trustworthiness is one of the needs of life and if people do not abide by it and do not become dependable, the system breaks up and no man trusts another any longer for the reason that the bedrock and foundation of social life is mutual trust. (Reliability in speech is a necessity of telling the truth and dependability in works is a requirement of correct conduct and its value derives independently from the intellect and does not stand in need of deductive reasoning and in this regard Islamic admonitions have the aspect of instruction, the divine Islamic law [shar'] countersigns what reason has).perceived and advises mankind to follow it

Reliability is not only pertinent to safeguarding the personal properties of other people but caring about community property and the public funds of the Islamic government are also instances of trustworthiness. The streets, water and the trees and everything else belonging to the society is considered as property [entrusted to .[us for safeguarding

Apart from that, taking

۱- Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۵۸.

good care of public assets is higher for the reason that if someone commits treachery with regard to the holdings of an individual, it is only to one person that he is indebted but once he is traitorous to assets of the community and the funds of the Islamic

society, he has betrayed all the Muslims. If that driver who is in charge of a government car is not honest and does not take good care of that car, he has committed treachery against all the people. He has committed treachery once he .uses public means for personal purposes

The Glorious Qur'an introduces the Islamic community as loyal and faithful to their :promises

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُون

(And those who are keepers of their trusts and covenants."(١"

:At another point, it orders them to return the trusts to their owners

إِنَّ اللهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الاَمَانَاتِ إِلَى أَهْلِهَا...

(Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to their owners..."(٢"

The reason for the injunction about dependability is because once the value of reliability is divested of the society, the people double-cross each other and they abuse each other's rights and consequently the social links and bonds which are the bedrock of reciprocal trust disintegrate and this is itself a beginning of disregard for .invaluable attributes and human qualities

b) The Function of Humility

point

If the people were to be humble and flexible in the face of right, they would not be indifferent and would show reaction to the incidents and occurrences that take place in society. Such

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.Surat al-Mu'minun ٢٣:٨ -١

.Surat al-Nisa' ۴:۵٨ -٢

a people respond to the call and guidance of the prophets and tremble once they are warned [about hell] and become lively and happy when given glad tidings [about the eternal Garden of bliss]. They become angry and tearful when they see someone being oppressed and get gladdened at seeing the right of someone being discharged. Such people are soft-hearted and humble in the face of right and have opened their .breasts to accept what is true

In contrast to them, stony-hearted people are apathetic and unexcited in the face of truths which are presented to them and to incidents and happenings taking place around them because their hearts do not have the preparedness to accept the truth and naturally they never used to respond positively to the call of the prophets and never used to be submissive in the face of right. They only think and care about .themselves and their animal desires

The Glorious Qur'an mentions two kinds of the people of the Book: the first kind is the :tribe of Israel who are the bitterest enemies of Islam and the believers

... ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُکُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِکَ فَهِیَ کَالْحِجَارَهِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَهً وَإِنَّ مِن الْحِجَارَهِ لَمَا یتفجَرُ منه الانهار وإنَّ منها یَشَّقَّقُ فَیَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءِ...

Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks from which..." streams burst forth, and surely there are some of them which split asunder so water (issues out of them..."(1)

Water springs from a rock but the Jews are so

.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۷۴ -۱

hard-hearted that never do their hearts break down so as to let tears flow and this .tribe is a pig-headed enemy of the believers

In contrast to this group, the Glorious Qur'an states with regard to the other group of

the people of the Book called the Christians, who are friendly and kind to the :believers

... وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُمْ مَوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا اِنَّا نَصارى ذلِکَ بِأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيسِينَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَأَنَّهُمْ لاَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

Certainly you will find the most violent of people in enmity for those who believe (to...“ be) the Jews and those who are polytheists, and you will certainly find the nearest in friendship to those who believe (to be) those who say, ‘We are Christians’; this is because there are priests and monks among them and because they do not behave (proudly.”(۱)

:In continuation of this verse, Allah sates

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَى أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ...

And when they hear what has been revealed to the Apostle, you will see their eyes“ (overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognize...”(۲)

This characteristic of flexibility and tenderness in the face of right became the reason of their believing, because their hearts were open to the truth. In contrast to them, the hard-hearted Jews never used to believe. It is for this reason that we see in history that a great deal of Christians became Muslims and became pure and sincere .believers, in contrast to a tiny number of Jews

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.Surat al-Ma’idah ۵:۸۲ -۱

.Surat al-Ma’idah ۵:۸۳ -۲

The Noble Prophet states that a day will come when no humble man will be found and the notion of humility and modesty will become meaningless. Some of the people who fancied themselves to be informed Islamists used to say that Islam does not approve of abjectness and lowliness, even in the presence of Allah man ought not to feel abject! Melancholy, crying and humility are worthless for such kind of people! This is in .spite of the Glorious Qur’an introducing the believers as humble

One of the Islamic scholars was accused of deviating from the right path because every time that the Glorious Qur'an was recited in his presence, he used to break down and cry. They used to conjecture that only in mourning ceremonies and misfortunes should people cry and shedding tears at the time of recitation of the Qur'an is an innovated practice in Religion. That is to say that this practice had so been abandoned and forsaken that if a person did it, he would get accused of .deviation and innovation in religion

Humility denotes a feeling of lowliness, abasement and modesty which occurs in the heart and its reflection manifests itself in the organs and limbs of man. The deceased Raghib Isfahani says, "Humility connotes a feeling of weakness and abasement and its most prevalent application is where its manifestations appear in the organs and ".limbs of man

:For instance, in the Glorious Qur'an humility has been used in these cases

A) In speech

On that Day they shall"

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follow the inviter, there is no crookedness on him, and the voices shall be low before the Beneficent God so that you shall not hear aught but a soft sound."(١)

B) In the eyes

Their eyes cast down, going forth from their graves as if they were scattered" locusts."(٢)

C) In the face

"Some faces on that Day shall be downcast."(٣)

D) In prostration

(And they fall down on their faces weeping, and it adds to their humility."(۴"

E) In supplication and prayer

(Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers."(۵"

F) In the heart

Has not the time come for those who believe that their hearts should not be humble" (for the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth?"(۶

Discourse concerning every one of the aforementioned instances calls for a lot of time and presently there is no opportunity of engaging in them now. In brief, it has become clear that humble is a man in whose conduct modesty, wisdom and intelligence appear without pride and boastfulness, like an abject slave he ought to put to death the spirit of egotism and pride because self-conceit and arrogance prevent man from modesty and humility and is without doubt a clear instance of the proud and rebellious :Devil

فَسَجَدَ المَلاَئِکَهُ کُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ * اِلاَّ اِبْلِیسَ أَبَی أَنْ یَکُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِینَ

So the angels made obeisance, all of them together, but Iblis (did it not); he refused" (to be with those who made obeisance."(۷

:While explicating this verse, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Pride and egotism overcame him and he prided himself on his creation over that of" Adam, and became bigoted on account of

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۱- Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۱۰۸.

۲- Surat al-Qamar ۵۴:۷.

۳- Surat al-Ghashiyah ۸۸:۲.

۴- Surat al-Isra' (or Bani Isra'il) ۱۷:۱۰۹.

.Surat al-Mu’minun ۲۳:۱-۲ -۵

.Surat al-Hadid ۵۷:۱۶ -۶

.Surat al-Hijr ۱۵:۳۰-۳۱ -۷

his origin (that he was created from the fire) and audaciously disobeyed Allah. Therefore, this enemy of Allah is the leader of the arrogant and the standard-bearer of the disobedient, who founded the prejudice and disputed with Allah over the dress of honor and greatness (which is specially reserved for Allah) and wore the garment of glory and honor, for which he was not worthy, and divested his body of the dress of ”.lowliness and humility

:In continuation, he states

Take lesson from what Allah did to Satan, whose countless acts of worship and“ unceasing endeavors were rendered null and void, in spite of worshiping Allah for six thousand years of which it is not clear whether their reckoning is of this world or of the hereafter. All this was a consequence of his momentary pride and disobedience. Therefore, is there any proud and rebellious man who remains safe from the retribution of Allah after Satan? Allah, the Exalted, will never make a slave, who has committed a sin for which an angel was expelled from the Garden of bliss, enter therein. Verily, the judgment of Allah is equal for the dwellers of the skies and the ”.inhabitants of the earth

It is important to mention this point that the fountainhead and cause of losing humility and of hard-heartedness and betrayal of people’s trusts is love of the world. Love of the world robs man of the grace for humility, crying and supplication and it is as a result of love of the

world that man gets polluted by doubt, and finally gets addicted to committing forbidden acts and insists on perpetrating great sins. Therefore, we are compelled to restrain the heart from falling in love with the world and making it its goal and we .ought to prevent it from being addicted to dubious and forbidden acts

If we notice that values and virtues are departing from society day by day and social corruption is gradually on the increase, it is because of man's inclination to materialism; this love and fondness of the world prepares the ground for the .perpetration of any sin imaginable

People do not get sad over the sins which they commit but once a worldly loss is inflicted upon them, they become sorrowful. This is as a result of love and affection for the world. If an individual sets their heart on the hereafter and fixes it as their final destination, he makes use of everything to secure his hereafter. If he is rich, he makes use of his wealth to secure his afterworld. If he is not well-to-do, he makes use of patience and submission to acquire the eternal Garden of bliss. If he is affluent, he spends his money in the way of Allah and if he is not wealthy, he helps people in other .ways

Once man's love for this world increases, he derives benefit from the permitted pleasures to the extent that he can, and if he got less than he wanted, he turns his

attention on dubious acts and tries to exonerate himself by seeking the help of religious edicts which have been passed by the religious jurisprudent. Today, he justifies a kind of illegal profit and tomorrow he commits a categorically and explicitly forbidden act and he drifts down to the extent that he does not dread committing any .kind of sin, no matter how big

It is natural that the heart of such a person has become hard, and the state of humility will be divested of him. Once love of the world becomes imbedded in man's heart, he commits treachery with regard to the possessions of other people and makes use of them for personal benefit. Therefore, what causes the hardness of heart is sin, .obsession with material things and pleasures of the flesh

Now, in order to remedy this pain, we ought to find its causes, we must see why this tree has gotten dry and what poisonous food has been given to it so as to cause it to dry. In order for the tree of man's life to remain safe and sound from plagues, healthy

food ought to be given to it and stop it from following animal instincts and passions .because they give birth to hard-heartedness and stone-heartedness

In order to root out hardness of heart and wipe out sin, diseases which plague the heart have to be made known to man and the fountainhead of all the blights which result in man's separation from Allah and spirituality is

love of the world. With different expressions, the Gracious Qur'an cautions man against the world and warns him about its consequences. Sometimes, in one sermon of the "Nahj al-Balaghah", the world had been reproached several times and Imam 'Ali ('a) always cautions his companions against the world, because His Holiness knows that the root cause of all pains is love of the world. While there is room for love .of the world, no virtue and no perfection remains stable for man

It is possible for man to make effort for many years and acquire virtues, but wipe all of them out with one deadly poison. It is because of this that the Qur'an, the Noble Prophet (S) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) used different reasons [and arguments] to advise men to disincline from the world. Of course, abstaining from the world does not mean quitting work and giving up [the acquisition of] knowledge and abolishing technology; on the contrary, it connotes not falling in love with the world and its alluring objects .and not chasing the passions

In one word, abstinence from the world denotes not giving primacy to the world and making use of it as a means of attaining the world. In this case, all of man's efforts and even the acquisition of wealth and possessions acquire an eschatological bearing for the reason that striving for the hereafter and seeking the world are related to the motivation and aim of man. For example, if man's motive for marrying

is only to satisfy his passions, this is called libertinism [and is a kind of seeking the world and a type of materialism]. He only absorbs himself with gratifying his animal

.passions and cravings of the flesh

All too often, it makes no difference for him whether he satisfies his sensual desires in a permissible or forbidden way. On the contrary, if his incentive in marrying is to obey Allah because it is He who has demanded that man founds a household, otherwise he would not have done so even if it was full of pleasure. But he marries for the good .pleasure of Allah, even if he may be besieged by thousands of problems

If you see that nowadays the foundations of family life have been enfeebled in the west, it is because they merely think about deriving pleasure and their sexual gratification is better secured by illicit means than by marriage; therefore, they do not confine themselves to the shackles of family life. When they see that the necessity of marriage is perseverance of hardships and problems, they quit it; but the Islamic .society is not like this

Until Islamic values preside, they patiently forebear the problems of family life, because Allah's wish is thus. Of course, Allah too has placed pleasures in this action (He has placed innate and natural pleasures in spouses and children) but in any case, it has problems too. Therefore, if a person derives benefit from the pleasures of the world for the good

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pleasure of Allah, not only is his action acceptable, but his work is meant for the hereafter, not worldliness. Worldliness [or materialism] takes place when primacy is .accorded to pleasures

The Insignificance and Minuteness of the World in Allah's View

To explain the frivolity of the world and reproach materialism, the Noble Prophet (S) :states in the following sentences

O Abu Dharr! I swear upon Allah in whose hands lies Muhammad's soul [or life] that if" the world had the value of one fly's wing and mosquito's wing before Allah, He would ".not have given even one drop of water to an infidel

Love of the world is a misfortune which more or less affects all of us. If we are presently not affected by it, there is [still] the probability of our getting afflicted by it in the future. It is therefore worthwhile to pay more attention to this explication of the Noble Prophet (S) and try to derive benefit from it for the edification of souls [and characters].

Pleasures of the flesh are the criterion of value for us, therefore we accord value to whatever pleases us more and that is more desirable for us. But Islam introduces another standard and that is conformity with the wish of Allah; that is to say, a thing has value once it is valuable before Allah.

The Noble Prophet (S) swears that if this world, with all its expansiveness and largeness and inclusive of all its gratifications, for which lives are lost and wasted, had the value of a fly's wing before Allah,

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He would not have given a drop of it to an infidel. If oceans and seas had price before Allah, an infidel would not derive benefit from it and He would only grant its benefits to His saints [awliya'] ('a). (Of course, the purport of infidel in this saying is one who is inimical and hostile to the religion and does not yield to right otherwise the weak, oppressed and coerced unbeliever has another reckoning.) The reason why you see the Muslim and infidel are equal in the derivation of pleasure from the world is because it has no essential value and is a means of trial.

Allah states in the Qur'an:

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ...

"Your possessions and your children are only a trial..."(۱)

Elsewhere, He states:

أَلْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيوهِ الدُّنْيا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا

"Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world; and the ever abiding,

(the good works, are better with your Lord in reward and are better in expectation."(٢)

In another verse, in regard to the destructibleness of the world and the indestructibleness of what is before Allah, He states:

مَا عِنْدَ كُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللهِ بَاقٍ...

"What is with you passes away and what is with Allah is enduring..."(٣)

Man imagines that the things of this world have value, and whoever has more is regarded as important; in expounding this false illusion, the Glorious Qur'an states:

فَأَمَّا الِانْسَانُ إِذَا مَا ابْتَلاهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَنَعَّمَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّى أَكْرَمَنِ * وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْتَلاهُ

١- Surat al-Taghabun ٦۴:١۵.

٢- Surat al-Kahf ١٨:۴۶.

٣- Surat al-Nahl ١۶:٩۶.

فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّى أَهَانَنِ

"And as for man, when his Lord tries him, then treats him with honor and makes him lead an easy life, he says, 'My Lord honors me; but when He tries him (differently), then straightens to him the means of subsistence, he says, 'My Lord has disgraced me'."(١)

The truth is that the world is a means of trials and man is an object of Allah's testing, whether he is granted of the blessings of this world or deprived of them. Neither is derivation of benefit from the world a sign of superiority nor is poverty and destitution an indication of lowliness. Therefore, because the world is worthless in Allah's point of view, He does not deprive an unbeliever of its blessings. In contrast, the Garden of eternal bliss and its graces have value before Allah; that is why He deprives man of it:

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّهِ أَنْ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْنَا مِن الْمَاءِ أَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمْ اللهُ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللهَ حَرَّمَهُمَا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ

And the inmates of the Fire shall call out to the dwellers of the Garden, saying, 'Pour" on us some water or that of which Allah has given you.' They shall say, 'Surely He has (prohibited them both to the unbelievers'."(٢)

Heaven and its graces have such value that the infidels do not merit deriving benefit from them and in truth this primary and real worth has been especially reserved for the saints [awliya'] of Allah. In contrast, the world has

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١- ٨٩:١٥-١۶ Surat al-Fajr.

٢- ٧:۵٠ Surat al-A'raf.

no value for Allah, the reason of which an unbeliever derives benefit from it too and all too often they procure more gain from it than the rest of the people and better make use of the facilities of this world; of course, the more they gather gain from it, the more it adds to their retribution because the unbelievers utilize those graces on the path of disobedience and deviation from right.

What is surprising is that in explaining the insignificance and irrelevance of this world, the Noble Prophet (S) swears upon Allah. It becomes clear that accepting this issue is very hard for ordinary people; how is it possible for the world not to have the value of a fly's wing with all its expansiveness, resources, facilities and innumerable pleasures which are enjoyable to man! The reason for this is because our awareness of the realities of the world is little and our inner eye is myopic.

We have made preoccupation with the world the cornerstone of our lives and have given primacy to the world, heedless of the fact that in the divine perspective and the Qur'anic point of view, the world lacks value and it has subjective value [or metaphorical interpretation] only to the extent of being an instrument. Its true value belongs to its excellences and beauties which result in man's prosperity and attainment of the good pleasure of Allah. Its true value is found in that which results in proximity to Allah which is that same

goal for which man has been created and it has been requested of him to make use of .every means and ways of arriving at it

Lesson ۱۴: Extolling Pursuit of the Hereafter, Asceticism and Spiritual Discernment in Religion and Reproaching Materialism

point

Parts of this hadith are concerned with reproaching the world, sections of which have been explained and now we shall study the other part. As has been mentioned frequently, censure of this world does not mean that man ought to give up work and earning and endeavor in the various aspects of social life and not to pursue wealth and possessions; on the contrary, criticism [of the world] denotes not getting attached to it and not setting it as a goal. In reality, this is the intention and motivation which gives direction to man's works and becomes the cause of that work being considered .as a commendable or abhorred and foul act

According to the verses of the Noble Qur'an, man arrives at the hereafter by means of the world and the world is a preparatory field for the next world. Therefore, man ought to work and make effort. If his endeavors and worldly activities are meant for the good pleasure of Allah, he attains prosperity and if his activities are intended for acquiring the world and its pleasures, he will be impelled to commit sin whether he .likes or not, and that is the path leading to the eternal fire and divine retribution

Reproaching Materialism and Elucidating the Highness of Faith

In order to stop the believers from getting enamored with the world and its pleasures, ,like the medical officers

try by various means to caution the patients from things which are harmful to them, the saints [awliya'] of Allah too have tried with different elucidations to make the world abhorred in the believer's point of view, one of those explanations is a saying

:which will be pointed at in this discourse

O Abu Dharr! The world and all that is in it has been cursed, except that which is a“ ”.means of attaining Allah’s pleasure

It is evident from the contents of this hadith that the curse which has been cast on the blessings of the world has not been directed at things like the ground, trees and the sky because a thing which can be a means of attaining the good pleasure of Allah is not only blessed but is also desirable; therefore, the curse has been cast on setting it as a goal and giving primacy to the world, for the reason that the creation of the world and its blessings are meant to make it a channel in the direction of man’s proximity to Allah. The world has been placed at the disposal of the man so that he may reach .Allah by means of it

Now, if this man perceives the world as means of arriving at Allah, the mercy of Allah will always descend upon him because he is pursuing the [right] goal and is proceeding in the correct direction. An intelligent man never gets heedless of the goal and always sets his eyes on the

destination and selects the path which makes him draw nigh to the destination. In other than this case, the merciful look of Allah is withdrawn from man because he has turned his heels and back against his goal and the aim of the world’s creation. Instead of trudging the course of prosperity, he has traversed the course of misery and .wretchedness

A companion of one of the slaves was sad because of the largeness of his income and occupation. The Imam (‘a) met him and asked, “Why are you unhappy?” The companion answered, “Your Highness, my wealth has increased, [and] I have become a victim of the world.” The Imam asked, “Why do you go after wealth and the acquisition of possessions?” The companion answered, “In order for me and my children not to be a burden to other people and so that I may manage to help my believing brothers.” His Holiness the Imam stated, “This is otherworldliness and is not

materialism, and there is no need to be worried about it. You ought to be worried when you get enamored with the gratifications of the world and be sad once you ".covet the world

There is nothing more abhorred by Allah than the world. He created it and then" turned it upside down and cut off the look of compassion and will not glance upon it till ".the Day of Resurrection

The purport of this saying has been explained in a lot of ethical books by a large number

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of the great men of letters, especially the deceased Imam Khomeini, and dependence has been laid on it. (It is very strange that for people of mystical knowledge, this very (.expression is enough to make them not inclined to the world in all their lives

There is no doubt that Allah, the Exalted, loves all his creatures and they are the effects of the beautiful Names and Attributes of Allah and from the viewpoint that the whole world is a manifestation of the perfect Attributes and Names of Allah, he pays attention to them and grants them grace until the Day of Resurrection. Allah does not pay attention to the world from the perspective that it is considered independent of him and primacy is given to it. Now, this question arises as to what thing this divine grace and loving look of Allah is attached; in explaining this point, His Holiness ('a) :states

".Allah loves nothing more than faith and abstaining from the forbidden acts"

The most beloved thing before Allah in the first place is faith and second is fear of Allah and quitting forbidden acts. It can be gathered from this hadith that quitting sins is more desirable than performing obligatory actions, even if it can be said that discharging obligatory actions is considered as a level of faith, for the reason that faith consists of both acts of the heart [or inward acts] and apparent [or outward] acts which are performed by means of the limbs and members of the

body. Anything in the world that is a means of attaining faith and abstaining from sins is beloved in the sight of Allah. Therefore, Allah has strongly recommended worldly affairs for the reason that man attains piety and proximity to Allah by means of them:

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) narrates that the Noble Prophet (S) stated,

"Nine tenths of worship is in trade and work."(۱)

In another hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states,

"A person who marries has procured half of his religion, therefore let him enjoin piety in the other half."(۲)

Or in another hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states,

"In Islam, there is no foundation more beloved than marriage."(۳)

There is no doubt that these are affairs of the world but for the reason that they become channels for worship and devotional servitude to Allah and forsaking sins, they are beloved by Allah.

The Need for Loving the Hereafter

"O Abu Dharr! Allah, the Exalted and Blessed, inspired revelation to my brother Jesus ['Isa]: O Jesus ['Isa], do not treasure the world, because I do not love it. Take pleasure in the hereafter since it is the abode of the last world."

The Noble Prophet (S) quotes the saying of Prophet Jesus ('a) that Allah inspired revelation that He did not love the world and Prophet Jesus too ought not to be friends with it. It is natural that the Noble Prophet [of Islam] (S) is an enemy of the world too, because the criteria for the friendship and enmity of the Infallibles ('a) with a person or thing

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸۵, p. ۳۱۹, hadith ۲ -۱

.Ibid., vol. ۱۰۳, p. ۲۱۹, hadith ۱۴ -۲

.Ibid., p. ۲۲۲, hadith ۴۰ -۳

is friendship and enmity with Allah. It is natural that the best role model for the believers and the followers of right in encountering the world is the conduct or way of .life of the Prophets (S) and the Infallibles

:With regard to the Noble Prophet's (S) perception of the world, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

The Holy Prophet treated this world disdainfully and regarded it low. He held it" contemptible and hated it. He realized that Allah kept it away from him with intention and spread it out for others by way of contempt. Therefore, he remained away from it by his heart, banished its recollection from his mind and wished that its attraction should remain hidden from his eyes so that he should acquire any clothing from it, or hope for staying in it. He conveyed from Allah the pleas (against committing sins), counseled his people as an admonisher (against divine chastisement) and called ((people) towards paradise as a conveyor of good tidings."(۱

This was despite that the Noble Prophet (S) had the jurisdiction of making use of all the material blessings of the world and according to his own statement, all the :treasures of the world were presented to him but he did not accept them

O Abu Dharr! Gabriel brought the treasures of the world on black and white mules" and said, 'O Muhammad! These are the treasures of the world and taking possession ".'of them in the world will not decrease your share before Allah

That the Noble Prophet (S) states

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۳۳۶, sermon [khutbah] ۱۰۸, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

that Gabriel came to him with the treasures of the world mounted on black and white mules is probably an illusion that the world is intertwined with pleasure and pain and

good and evil. No person will be found who only has pain and sorrow in his life and derives no pleasure and vice versa no individual will be found who only derives gratification in life and/or not encounter any pain and sorrow. In reality, beside every pain there is pleasure and beside every pleasure there is pain, and both of them are :means of trial for man

... وَنَبْلُوكُمْ بِالْشَرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً...

(We have made you entangled in good and bad so that we may try you…"(1)…"

The other point is that Gabriel says to the Noble Prophet (S) that if you make use of all the treasures of the world, nothing of your share of the hereafter will be decreased. One of the defects of material pleasures is that the more man derives pleasure from them, the more the possibility of his getting deprived of the gratifications of the next world. But the saints [awliya'] of Allah and the prophets ('a) are not like this; it is for this reason that Gabriel says that no share of the Noble Prophet (S) will be reduced in .exchange for your making use of all the treasures of the world

:In response, the Noble Prophet (S) states

My friend Gabriel, I do not need them. I thank Allah whenever I get satiated and I ask"

١- Surat al-Anbiya' ٢١:٣٥.

".from Him whenever I get hungry

The best request a believer can have is that he should derive benefit from the blessings of Allah, on the one hand, and thank for it and, on the other hand, feel abjectness and in need of Allah and always open his hand [in supplication] to him because man is an existent [made up] of two equal parts; he has to both derive benefit from the blessings of Allah and thank for them—and this very attention and thanksgiving to the blessings of Allah results in prosperity—and on the other hand always feel abjectness and need, so as not to become proud and negligent and not

conceive himself as superior than others. The Noble Prophet (S) states that having all the riches of the world at my disposal does not benefit me in any way. I always ought to be dependent on Allah all the time and always ask for blessings from him and be .thankful in return for those blessings

Allah's Benevolence and Awareness of Religion and Asceticism in the World

:In continuation of the hadith, the Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Whenever Allah intends good for a person, He gives him religious" ".knowledge and expertise and makes him ascetic in the world and aware of his faults

:Whenever Allah intends to do good to a slave [of His], He grants him three things

.Awareness of religion .۱

.Asceticism in the world and disinclination to its pleasures .۲

.Awareness of his faults and defects .۳

In contrast to these three characteristics, the worst thing for man is ignorance about) religion, love

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of the world and self-conceit and being preoccupied with fault-finding in other (.people

With consideration of the previous issues and what will be mentioned later, the main attention is on the sentence 'and makes him ascetic in the world' because the discussion concerns the station and status of the world. Therefore, if a person feels in his heart that he has no inclination to the world and only derive benefit from it to the extent of remedying his needs and engage in worldly affairs for the sake of .discharging divine duties, he ought to know that Allah intends good for him

Of course, in one sense Allah intends good for all people, but on the basis of His institutionalized will, He has made certain duties incumbent upon all people and has

cautioned them against forbidden acts, now if free-willed man selects a correct path —even if the prerequisites of selection of the correct path are brought about by the grace of Allah—and has set the foundation to traverse the course of servitude and loves things which are pleasing to Allah, and make friends with the friends of Allah and takes strides in the way of Allah, the special existential will of Allah is responsible for :making him successful

وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الآخِرَة وَسَعَى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا

And whoever desires the hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive and he is a“ (believer, (as for) these, their striving shall surely be accepted.”(۱

In contrast, Allah has no enmity

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۱- ۱۷:۱۹ (Surat al-Isra’ (or Bani Isra’il.

with any person and does not send man to hell without cause. Therefore, if a person, of his own volition and as a result of his own bad choice, selects a path of infidelity and sin; the existential will of Allah makes him low and deprives him of the opportunity to .perform good works

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَة عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْليها مَذْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا

Whoever desires this present life, We hasten to make him therein what We please“ for whomever We desire, the We assign to him the hell, he shall enter it despised, (driven away.”(۱

Therefore, a person for whom Allah intends good is granted success in three things :((by Allah

Firstly, the opportunity to acquire knowledge, and in contrast, if Allah does not intend good for a person, He deprives him of the opportunity to acquire knowledge, as has :been narrated in the hadiths

"Whenever Allah drives a slave away, He deprives him of acquisition of knowledge."(2)

We thank Allah that of all his countless slaves, He has granted us the opportunity to learn religious knowledge. We ought to appreciate the worthiness of this great honor which has been allotted to us because with this great divine grace, the ground [or prerequisite] for attaining perfection has been provided. It has been narrated in a hadith that:

"All perfections [or virtues] are summed up in three things: 1) expertise in religious knowledge; 2) arranging an orderly program for the daily affairs of life; 3)

1- ١٧:١٨ Surat al-Isra' (or Bani Isra'il).

2- ١٩۶ Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ١, p.

patience and perseverance of hardships."(1)

The second grace of Allah is disinclination to the world and that man's heart ought not to covet the allurements and enticements of the world. Unfortunately, this characteristic lacks in most of us and we are more or less attached to the pleasures of the world. If man is too obsessed with rank and dignity in life and if he is always chasing after better cars, a better house, or better clothes, he is attached to the world and is deprived of attaining the blessings of the eternal Garden of bliss; as the Qur'an states:

تِلْکَ الدَّارُ الآخِرَهُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لاَ يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِی الأَرْضِ وَلاَ فَسَادًا...

"As for that future abode, We assign it to those who have no desire to exalt themselves in the earth nor to make mischief and the good end is for those who guard against evil..."(2)

In interpreting this verse, a hadith has been narrated even if man's desire is only that he ought to have a better shoe lace than that of another person, this is an instance of seeking superiority and predominance over the others.(3) So, man ought to try not to

be trapped in the snare of the world, not even to the extent of desiring to have a better shoe lace than the others around. The heart has to be directed at Allah and the hereafter, not at shoe laces, houses, cars and et cetera et cetera, because the heart is a place for the descending of Allah's

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.Ibid., vol. ۷۸, p. ۱۷۲, hadith ۵ -۱

.Surat al-Qasas ۲۸:۸۳ -۲

.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۶, p. ۸۵ -۳

:light

"The heart of a believer is Allah's abode."(۱)

To whatever extent man's heart deviates and gets preoccupied with the world, man gets deprived of the spiritual perfections [or virtues] to the same extent.

Elucidating on the perception of the prophets (S) with regard to the world, Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"Certainly, in the Prophet of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his Progeny) was sufficient example for you and a proof concerning the vices of the world, its defects, the multitude of its disgraces and its evils, because its sides had been constrained for him while its flanks had been spread for others; he was deprived of its milk and turned away from its adornments.

"If you want, I will, as a second example, relate to you concerning Moses ('a), the Interlocutor of Allah, when he said, 'O Allah! I need whatever good Thou may grant me.' (Qur'an ۲۸:۲۴) By Allah, he asked Him only for bread to eat because he was used to eating the herbs of the earth, and the greenness of the herbs could be seen from the delicate skin of his belly due to his thinness and paucity of his flesh.

"If you desire I can give you a third example of David ('a). He is the holder of the Psalms and the narrator among the people of paradise. He used to prepare baskets of

date palm leaves with his own hands and would say to his companions, 'Who among you will help me by purchasing

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۵٨, p. ٣٩ -١

.it?' He used to eat barley bread bought out of its price

If you desire, I will tell you about 'Isa ('a), son of Mary ('a). He used a stone for a" pillow, put on coarse clothes and ate rough food. His condiment was hunger. His lamp at night was the moon. His shade during the winter was just the expanse of the earth eastward and westward. His fruits and flowers were only what grows from the earth for the cattle. He had no wife to allure him, nor any son to give grief, nor wealth to deviate his attention, nor greed to disgrace him. His two feet were his conveyance (and his two hands his servant."(١

Has Allah got enmity with His saints [awliya'] so as to deprive them of worldly pleasures? Or are the hardships and problems of the world a means of their perfection and a sign of divine love for them? It is necessary to emphasize this point that it ought not to be imagined that wantonness and laziness have to be preferred and we ought to quit our obligations by seeking self-seclusion and retirement and not seek what is permissible [of the pleasures of this world] or quit going after protecting !the honor of Islam

The discussion is concerned with not falling in love with the world. If all the treasures and riches of the world were placed at the disposal of an individual and he derived all the pleasure from it but did not fall

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.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۵٠٨, sermon [khutbah] ١۵٩ -١

in love with it, no harm touches him. Thus, was Solomon, the son of David, who did not let all that wealth and that great kingdom [which he possessed] harm his prophetic

?mission and authority because he did not fall in love with it

He himself used to eat dry bread and employed his wealth and power to protect the honor of Allah's religion. If he went to or threatened to go to war with the Queen of Sheba, it was for the expansion of the divine government and in order to uproot polytheism from the surface of the world; not because he wanted to derive more .pleasure from the world for himself

The sum of the hadiths consecutively narrated by several authorities does not leave any doubt with regard to the asceticism of the lives of the Infallibles and that they endured hardships and they were not worldly and pleasure-seeking. Their method was that of cautioning men from worldliness. In the same way that there is no doubt regarding the existence of the Infallible Imams ('a), there is no doubt too concerning the way of their lives. One of their most delicate characteristics was worshiping Allah, rising up early in the morning [for prayer], supplicating, and crying. Friend and foe, .Shi'ah and Sunni, have all acknowledged and written books about these truths

Their method of character training was that of cautioning people against the world and inciting abhorrence of material gratifications. Attention has to be paid to this fact that

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the Infallible Imams ('a) always encouraged others to work and earn livelihoods in order not to be burdens of other people [in the society]. In reality, this means a medium between the world and Allah's pleasure, which is not possible for ordinary .people

In the early days of Islam wrong interpretations were made from the hadiths which reproached and castigated the world. When the world was reproached, people used to imagine that they ought not to derive any benefit from the world at all and man ought to live in a cave and wear clothes made of leaves. On the other hand, when they saw work and endeavor being praised in some of the hadiths, they imagined that .everything [in the world] has to be sacrificed for the stomach

Those who had been trained and schooled in the school of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) used to know that there is no disparity or incompatibility between deriving benefit from the blessings of the world and seeking the hereafter, but that love of the world is incompatible with love of the hereafter and there is no possibility of combining those two. It is not possible to both love Allah and what is hated by Him. The world as a means of attaining the hereafter and the good pleasure of Allah is not abhorred.

In order to conceive the balance between love of the world and/or lack of love for the world, man's outward works are not the criteria, but the standard is

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inward intention and motivation. Of course, sometimes works themselves show [the intention] of those who claim not to be in love with the world but break their heads and hands for the sake of the world and do not even abstain from what is prohibited. Without the slightest doubt, the intention of such an individual is seeking the world.

Therefore, nothing is achieved by making empty claims and the intention in the heart has to be taken into consideration. There are some Sufis who make pretentious claims in poetic language about being disinclined and disregardful of the world but will not let go of a single coin whatsoever!

Lesson ۱۵: Wisdom, Foresight and an Angle of the Prophet's (S) Way of Life

point

The Noble Prophet (S) reminds us about the defects of the world and materialism [or worldliness] and in contrast gives the good news of the superiority of asceticism and disinclination to the world. It is something of a miracle that the Noble Prophet (S) mentions issues of edification of character in one specific field by means of different expressions and various ways, the result of which is that everyone benefits from his sayings according to his own understanding and natural capacity.

Issues are so many and have been expressed in different ethical and instructional forms that every person can derive benefit from them according to his own taste and

disposition and select the best provisions of edification of character which suit them. One of the ways which the Noble Prophet (S) has selected is recommending asceticism and encouraging people to

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undertake it and citing the invaluable effects which result from disinclination to the world.

Wisdom and Foresight Are the Products of Asceticism

“O Abu Dharr! A slave of Allah does not live ascetically save that Allah stabilizes wisdom in his heart and his tongue overflows with it, and makes it aware of the defects, pains and quarrels of the world and leads him to the eternal Garden of bliss in a sound state.”

In this section, the emphasis of the Noble Prophet (S) is that asceticism and disinclination makes man’s heart ready to accept wisdom and after that he perceives truths. People who are obsessed about the world cannot conceive the realities of the world because love of the world makes man heedless and negligent. In contrast, people who are disinclined to the world perceive realities because they are superior over the world and choose the best way after comparing it with the hereafter.

Asceticism denotes disinclination or lack of desire, as has been narrated with regard to the brothers of Yusuf (‘a):

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ

“And they sold him for a small price, a few pieces of silver, showing no desire for him.”(١)

Asceticism in the world means that man ought not to be inclined to the world; if he has some wealth and certain facilities at his disposal, he thinks about how to use them for the good pleasure of Allah and is not obsessed with acquisition of possessions. People like prophet Solomon (‘a) had such a state that they used to eat

.Surat Yusuf ۱۲:۲۰ -۱

dry bread in spite of having so much wealth and a great kingdom and lived in (.contentment and frugality

In explanation of the sentence, “Allah stabilizes wisdom in his heart” it is necessary to :mention a few points

There is a close relationship between disinclination to the world and perception of .۱ divine knowledge; that is to say, it is impossible to find a person who in spite of his heart being obsessed with the world, his soul at the same time is overflowing with .divine knowledge and awareness

Wisdom, which is a product of disinclination to the world, stabilizes man’s . ۲ knowledge and awareness and defends against instability of belief and wavering of the mind. It is possible for man to attain knowledge and perceive the truth but still his awareness is shaky and unstable because he has not attained certitude or certainty, .which stabilizes and steadies knowledge in the heart

Among the basic principles of religion, in addition to the fundamental principle of belief, the stability of knowledge also has special value and it is for this reason that seasonal and periodical faith not only has no value, but also has negative :consequences and has been reproached in various instances in the Qur’an

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِى الْفُلْكِ دَعَوُا اللهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُون

So when they ride in the ships they call upon Allah, being sincerely obedient to Him,“ (but when He brings them safe to the land, lo! They associate others (with Him).”(۱

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.Surat al-‘Ankabut ۲۹:۶۵ -۱

Once wisdom has become steady, it does not remain confined to the heart but its effects become apparent in speech and works and conduct too. The words of a person in whose heart wisdom has become stable will also be wise: he abstains from vain and futile talk and counsels in such a philosophical and thoughtful way that his .words deserve praise and extolment

Yes, the tongue is passage for man’s heart and, in other words, the exudations of a man’s heart are carried out on the tongue because it is the oozing external part of the jar which is inside him, of course this oozing out not only appears on the tongue but .with the rest of man’s conduct too

The other effect of aversion of the world is that the defects of the world become apparent to man; that is to say, man can witness the deficiencies, lowliness and inferiority of the world in the case that he liberates himself from attachment to it, otherwise it is not expected of the lovers of the world to see the defects of their beloved and darling (the world), because infatuation with the world blinds man’s eyes from seeing its defects and deafens man’s ears from hearing its deficiencies, on the contrary he perceives as beautiful its vileness and supposes his discreditable conduct which has appeared as a result of excessive fondness with the world to be fair. This interpretation has been explained by different expressions in the Glorious Qur’an, amongst

:them

... زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ...

(We have made their deeds fair-seeming to them..."(۱..."

... بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَمْرًا...

(your souls have made the matter light for you..."(۲..."

... وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ...

"...and the Satan has made their deeds fair-seeming to them..."(۳)

The various interpretations are indicative of this truth that falling in love with the world causes the world and the worldly behavior of man to manifest themselves as fair-seeming in his perception and the more this fondness increases, the more beautiful the world and its defects appear in man's perception for the reason that the lover does not see the defects and deficiencies of their beloved. Without doubt, such an individual only sees the outward deceptive world and is incapable of perceiving and comprehending its inner side and seeing beyond it:

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِن الْحَيوهِ الدُّنْيا وَهُمْ عَنِ الآخِرَهِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

"They know the outward of this world's life, but of the hereafter they are absolutely heedless."(۴)

In contrast, clear-sighted and pragmatic people with regard to the world see both its good and its bad. This group, in contrast to the first group which only sees the beautiful appearance and fair-seeming lines and spots from this venomous snake, also perceives its deadly poison and fatal fang:

"The example of the world is like a serpent. It is soft to the touch but its inside is full of venom. An ignorant person who has fallen into deceit is attracted towards it but a wise and intelligent man keeps on his guard against it."(۵)

Yes,

۱- Surat al-Naml ۲۷:۴.

۲- Surat Yusuf ۱۲:۱۸.

۳- Surat al-Naml ۲۷:۲۴.

۴- Surat al-Rum ۳۰:۷.

۵- Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۱۴۱, short saying ۱۱۵, trans. Fayd al-Islam.

the spiritual insight and far-sightedness of divine people is a hurdle against their getting deceived by the superficial manifestations of the world and their profound perception of horizons further than material horizons is their basic difference with materialistic superficial perceptions of hedonists; in the words of Imam 'Ali ('a):

"The lovers of Allah are those who look at the inward side of the world while the other people look at its outward side. They busy themselves with the remoter benefits while the other people busy themselves with in the immediate benefits. Therefore, they kill in their hearts those things which they feared would have killed them and leave here in this world what they think would leave them."(۱)

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! If you see a brother of yours living ascetically in the world, give heed to his words because wisdom is given to him."

This talk is a continuation of His Holiness' that Allah establishes wisdom in the heart of whoever lives ascetically. Therefore, if man were disinclined to the world, he has attained wisdom and his speech will be wise when he speaks for the reason that the speech which flows from the heart of a person who is detached from the world undoubtedly settles in the heart. An ascetic person has proved by means of his conduct that he believes in what he says; therefore, expectation of wise talk from him has to be had. In contrast, a person who is seduced by the world

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۱- Ibid., p. ۱۲۸۷, short saying ۴۲۲.

and is drowned in its gratifications is deprived of wisdom and knowledge and the depravations of this world have closed his eyes against truths and consequently his word is unavailing and far from wisdom.

Signs of the Most Ascetic People

point

When the discussion reaches here, Abu Dharr gets enamored by ascetics, for this reason he requests the Prophet (S) to explain the attributes of an ascetic so that he may embark upon making plans of friendship and learning wisdom from the ascetic once he identifies him. In response, the Noble Prophet (S) acquaints the most ascetic :person by citing five characteristics

Whoever does not Forget Graves And Decomposed Corpses .۱

The first characteristic of the most ascetic person is that he does not forget graves and decomposed corpses. The lovers of the world always have their eyes set on the world and its attractions and mourn over things which they do not themselves have; but a person who does not pay heed to the world always sets his sight on graves and the ruins of the world, because they are the signs of the destructibility and extinction .of the world

An ascetic is a person who does not forget graves, desolate places, and ancient and obliterated places. Of course, not in that sense that man ought to spent their entire time from morning to evening at grave sites but to go visiting the dwellers of tombs .from time to time and take lesson from them

People seduced by the world turn their faces away and flee when they pass by graves fearing lest their feasting and drinking

gets overturned. They get upset when they hear death being mentioned and know it to be a fault; in contrast, those who have set their attention on the hereafter always .remember the Day of Resurrection and never forget death

And Renounces The Adornments Of The World .۲

The second attribute of the most ascetic person is that he renounces excess adornments in the world. Without the least doubt, man has need of the facilities of the world and derives benefit from comforts which are necessary for the continuation of life; amenities such as clothing, housing, food and embellishments and all too often

they play a role in the perfection of man and for this reason the divine law not only has permitted but exhorted them too.

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللهِ الَّتِی أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ ...

"Say: Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?"(1)

What ought to be done is to benefit from worldly facilities and adornments to the extent of need and forsake excessive and extravagant adornments and give the rest to others, because if he does not content himself with only what is needed and knows no limits and bounds, he will not get contented no matter how much he derives benefit from worldly embellishments and gratifications and no matter how much he adds to the decoration, luster and beautification [of his house] and continually changes curtains with more expensive and exorbitant ones and acquires for himself a modern car because man's nature

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1- Surat al-A'raf ۷:۳۲.

is such that it seeks variety and is never satiated not recognizing any limitations.

With all certainty, such an individual is not an ascetic; an abstinent person is one who derives benefit from the world to the extent of need. He contents himself with a protecting roof and does not intend to acquire a grand building. Or, if he has need of a car, he gets a car which suits his needs of going to and fro, he does not insist on the car being definitely modern and luxurious.

In this sentence, His Holiness' emphasis is on forsaking superfluous adornments, otherwise embellishments which are a necessity of life and/or are necessary in the maintenance of individual and family life are not only not blameworthy but have also been recommended; like man's adorning himself for his wife and a woman's beautifying herself for her husband, wearing clean clothes, cleaning the hair and face,

combing the hair and perfuming the body. Basically, the status of a believing person necessitates that he abstains from outward and inward contaminations and bad .smells which cause the aversion of others

For this reason, Islam emphasizes keeping the body and clothes clean and beautifying the face and hair. It has been recommended a lot that when man wants to go to the mosque and/or enter a group of people, he ought to spray perfume so that the others may enjoy his sweet smell, not a despicable and abhorrent smell which .offends them

Or, it has been advised that

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at the time of prayer man should spray perfume and two rak'ats of a man who has perfumed themselves has more reward than seventy rak'ats of prayer. What is necessary is for man to forsake additional adornments which are not rationally wise and are not beneficial in the direction of man's perfection and are signs of hedonism .and mammonism and adoration of pleasures of the flesh

:It has been recorded in description of the Noble Prophet's (S) characteristics that

The Prophet's (S) habit was to look himself in the mirror and clean his face and comb" his hair. Often times, he used to do so with the help of water placed in front of him and beside the people of the house, he used to beautify himself for his companions and used to state, 'Allah loves his slave who prepares and beautifies himself when going (out of the house to visit his brothers'."(۱

He Prefers What Is Eternal Over What Is Ephemeral .۳

The third quality of the most ascetic person is that he prefers what is eternal over .what is ephemeral

If a comparison is made between the short-lived and vanishing pleasures of the world and the constant and everlasting pleasures of the hereafter, he wisely opts for the

eternal pleasures of the Garden of bliss overlooking the ephemeral pleasures of this world. He also would rather bear the hardships and difficulties of responsibilities and duties than the ease and comfort of the world, because his far-sighted eyes are set on the future of the world; when moving, he only perceives the

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.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۶, p. ۳۳۰ -۱

.destination and he does not recognize the world save as a bridge for passage

وَالآخِرَهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

(While the hereafter is better and more lasting."(۱"

And He Does Not Look Forward To Tomorrow .۴

And Considers Himself Among The Dead .۵

The fourth and fifth characteristics of the most ascetic person are that he does not .count tomorrow as part of his life and considers himself as living among the dead

Man has to always perform his duties and never stop striving and activity. Without the least doubt, a person who has embarked upon discharging responsibilities cannot be in comfort and luxury and a pleasure-seeker, because endeavor and activity are not .compatible with luxurious and lazy living

A person who is obsessed with the world is always after acquiring facilities for pleasure and ease; when time comes for activity and endeavor, sometimes lessons and discussion and personal study and the rest of the duties, his love of comfort dissuades him from activity and postpones duties to tomorrow and he is not prepared to hurt his comfort and pleasure-seeking. In truth, procrastination and postponing duties to the other day is a result of man's long-term planning for himself and his hope of attaining them in the future of his life and for this reason he puts off today's .responsibilities in the hope of tomorrow

It is natural that attaining those protracted hopes calls for a long lifespan and it is for this reason that the mammon hopes for a longer and more protracted life and this results in procrastination and postponement of works and/or as a result of fear

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.Surat al-A'la ٨٧:١٧ -١

.of failure, causes dejection and stress

An ascetic person and one who is disinclined to the world discharges his daily duties [on time] and contrary to a hedonist, he does not count tomorrow as part of his life so as to put his duties off until then, because he is not sure of his being alive the following day. He believes that even if he still had a tomorrow, he will have other responsibilities .to discharge

Protracted Hopes and Procrastination of Obligations Is a Sign of Weakness of Faith and Weakness of Confidence in Allah

As has been mentioned, a lot of people have protracted hopes and have expectations of living long years in this world and their work and endeavor is for the future and they are always worried about the future and that which must come to pass. They are distressed that if they do not go to university, they might not have a job and not have an income for their daily living. They are anxious about whether their future lives will .be easy or not

Of course, this nervousness is a result of not having a spirit of faith and trust in Allah; otherwise, a person who completely relies on Allah and perceives his graces and blessings has no apprehensions about tomorrow because Allah, the Exalted, is the Possessor and Owner of everything. In addition, from where is a person who is ?nervous about his future certainly sure that he has a tomorrow

Islam and religious sciences commend that man has to be engaged in discharging today's duties and not to be thinking about tomorrow because it

is not clear whether he will be alive up to the next hour or not. Of course, apprehending being deprived of the world and future pleasures of the earth is blameworthy, otherwise if man discharges today's duties and makes plans and decisions for possible future responsibilities, this is not only praiseworthy but is considered a part of religious duties.

Every duty and responsibility is incumbent on a particular day and time assigned to it: today my prayers are incumbent and I have no responsibility over tomorrow's prayers, but if I remain alive until tomorrow, it becomes incumbent that I recite prayers tomorrow too; it is the same with rest of the duties every one of which is incumbent in its own occasion and we do not have any more duties [other than that].

Therefore, being anxious about the future and the end of his worldly life is irrelevant but apprehension of the definite future and last day is proper because there is no escaping from tomorrow's resurrection and hereafter, even if it were pleasing to some people if there was escaping from the hereafter.

Allah, the Exalted, states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ...

"O you who believe! Be careful (of your duty to) Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent on for the morrow..."(۱)

In continuation of the hadith, with regard to Allah's recommendations to him about forsaking the collection of wealth, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"O Abu Dharr! Allah has not sent revelation

۱- Surat al-Hashr ۵۹:۱۸.

to me [recommending] so that I may engage in the acquisition of wealth and has on

the contrary inspired me to thank, praise and adore the Lord for His graces and to be ".one of the prostrating slaves and when your death draws nigh, worship Him

If the collection of wealth and saving of money was desirable and would cause the perfection of man, Allah would have advised the Noble Prophet (S) to embark upon acquisition and preservation of possessions and riches. But Allah never at all made such recommendations but to be engaged in praising, worshiping and supplicating to .Allah to the moment of his death

Of course, adoration and servitude of Allah has various manifestations: sometimes worship denotes discharging personal duties and early rising [for the purpose of worship] and at other times it connotes carrying out social duties, acquisition of knowledge, teaching, preaching and propagation of Islamic culture and finally every .duty which is incumbent upon man

An Angle of the Prophet's (S) Way of Life

People who have selected the Noble Prophet as the best model and example ought to try to their best ability to harmonize their lifestyles with his; it is for this reason that :His Holiness explains a niche of practical way of life and conduct

O Abu Dharr! I wear coarse clothes and sit on the ground, wash my hands after food" ".and whoever does not follow my way and conduct is not from me

The standard of deriving benefit from the material benefits for the Prophet (S), who has the power of dominion

over creation [and] can have the world at his free disposal, is to the measure of securing his basic needs. Previously, His Holiness stated that Gabriel [Jibra'il] set the treasures of the world at the Noble Prophet's (S) free disposal but His Holiness abstained from consenting. In this section, he clearly states his contentment, simple :living and social conduct

On account of the way of life of Allah’s Prophet (S), as the most eminent creature and bringer of revelation, being the object of attention of the Muslims and even the non-Muslims, all the practical conduct and states and even the minute details of his way of life and social manners were under the close scrutiny of his companions.

It is for this reason that a lot of the details of his way of life have been narrated by word of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), his companions, the generation which followed the companions but never met the Noble Prophet (S) himself and many other people. In addition to that, His Holiness himself in certain instances has stated a section of his way of conduct in the same way that in this section he hints at an angle of his personal conduct so that the followers of His Holiness, by knowing his natural temperament and conduct, may select him as their role model and example.

His Holiness states that he wears coarse clothes and does not wear soft clothes so as to be at ease, he sits on the floor not on fine and

expensive carpets. He was bound to eat with his fingers at the time of eating food; in addition to that, he used to clean his hands after food. He used to mount a bare and undecorated donkey and used to carry another man at the back. From this explanation the humility and peak of servitude of His Holiness becomes apparent. It is amazing that His Holiness was this humble and down-to-earth, to the extent that he used to mount an undecorated donkey and as a result of the extremity of his humility used to carry another man with him, in an environment where pomp, arrogance and haughtiness used to reign with injustice.

In contrast, we, the claimers of being his followers, are preoccupied with wearing good clothes and eating delicious food and finally securing a comfortable and easy life for ourselves. We covet buying a modern and luxurious car and desire to derive as much pleasure from the world as possible.

It is worth mentioning that in this era it is not possible to expect the people’s ways of life to conform with the time of the Noble Prophet (S) because the standards of life

and the economic conditions of every era differs to that of another age and the equivalence of scientific and technological advancements have brought about great leaps in the living conditions of mankind. What is incumbent is to follow the inviolable Islamic laws and fundamental postulates and in every time the social position of [the majority

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of the] people has to be taken into consideration and to abstain from pomp, .acquisitiveness and pride

Lesson ۱۶: The Danger of Loving Wealth and Position and Praising Contentment and Simple Living

The World, a Goal or a Means

On the basis of the Qur'anic perception, if there were no world, there would not be a hereafter. We build our hereafter by means of our volitional works and actions in this world, as has been recorded that the world is a [preparatory] ground for the hereafter. Therefore, if there were no world, no one would go to the eternal Garden .because the blessings of heaven are a reward for worldly works

The divine graces, virtues and transcendental states of the hereafter are all produce of our efforts and works which man has discharged in the world; therefore, the world has a lot of values. Taking this reality into consideration, the question is presented as to why so much reproach and condemnation has been heaped on the world, which .has such value

In response to this question, it ought to be said that the life of this world from the point of view that it is in the category of Allah's creatures has no individual essential reality whatsoever and is basically the life system of the world and the best system .that enjoys the benefits of ultimate perfection and beauty

For this reason, the main problem has to be looked for elsewhere. With a bit of concentration on the verses of the Glorious Qur'an and the hadiths, we gather that

the fault and flaw lies in the quality of man's relationship with the world

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and his way of interaction with it, because it is that very way of his interaction with the world which can either be beneficial or harmful, valuable or worthless, good or bad for .his future

From his interaction, conduct, life and future of man, save in a few instances which as a result the deterministic imbalances give rise to a chain of vices and deficiencies, what defect and fault can be found with the world? In addition, these vices and flaws .are incomparable to the countless virtues and perfections of the world

Therefore, it has become clear that blame and fault lies in the way of man's relationship with the world; a relationship which is formed on the basis of giving primacy to the world and a materialistic perception to the world: the perception of people who imagine that beside the life of this world there is no other life but in reality this fallacy is null and void looking at the world with such a perception is an error .which will give rise to more mistakes in the conduct and behavior of man

Therefore, we ought to rectify our conception of the world and understand that living is not confined to the life of the world but there is an eternal life for man beyond this earth. In the case that man considers the world as a station and passing place, not the main destination and ultimate goal, it is natural that he will secure for himself the ,conveniences of life

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enough wealth and riches needed for attaining the necessary perfection. In this case, food, clothing, housing, a car, money, riches and leadership are considered as preliminaries and means, not the main goal. But in the instance that they are the main goal, neither preliminaries nor means, they prevent man from attaining human .perfection and his ultimate goal and it is for this reason that they have been criticized

With regard to what has been mentioned, the Noble Prophet reproaches love of :wealth and position stating

O Abu Dharr! The love of wealth and position harms man's religion more than two" vicious wolves injure the herd of sheep which they ambush at night time so that they ".have all the time till morning to ravage the herd of sheep

In order to describe the importance of the subject and warn the Islamic community [ummah] about the danger of love of the world and the jeopardy of obsession with worldly position and social status, His Holiness likens love of the world and position and social rank to two vicious wolves which ambush a herd of sheep confined in a certain place at night and from night until morning embark upon devouring them. It is natural that once a wolf attacks a herd of sheep, it does not get content with one sheep but tears apart every one of them and finally gets busy with eating them. Now, ?if two brutal wolves assault a herd of sheep, do they leave a sheep alive

The danger of

p: ۲۱۵

love of the world and leadership to man's religion and ethical values is more than the jeopardy of two vicious wolves which attack a herd of sheep, because love of the world and leadership destroys the spiritual and human and religious identity of man: .that to which the identity and real existence of man is attached

The purport of His Holiness' words in this section has been consecutively narrated by) several authorities of hadith and it has been narrated by different expressions. Even in the book entitled, "Usul al-Kafi" a section has especially been set aside for the (.recrimination of love of the world and leadership

His Holiness' words are not idle talk but a reality which has been set forth in the form of a warning to the Muslims. This is a reality which historical experience has also confirmed. From the early days of Islam up to now, the root of all the treacheries which have been committed against Islam has been love of money and leadership,

because the danger that a person who has been seduced by earthly riches and power poses on religion is more than that of any other enemy!

Diverting the course of the caliphate and forcibly usurping it and the establishment of oppressive and invalid governments and all the blows which have been inflicted on the body of Islam arise from love of wealth and position. Therefore, with regard to the jeopardy of love of riches and status to man's religion, we ought to be

vigilant, and until we are youths and the two mean qualities of love of wealth and obsession with rank have not yet become firm in us, fight them and never let them develop roots in our hearts.

If we acquire wealth, we ought to make use of only what we need for our basic needs and put the rest at the disposal of the poor, relatives and the needy friends. We ought to try to give that which we love most to others, for the reason that the Qur'an states:

لَنْ تَنَالُوا البِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّون...

"By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend benevolently out of what you love..."(۱)

(Without the least doubt, giving things which man loves prevents the establishment of love of wealth in man's heart.)

The likeness of what we have mentioned can be explained in two aspects of fighting against the vice of love of leadership [and power]: once man attains leadership and responsibility, he ought to try not to let the feelings of superiority, arrogance and bossiness appear in him but try to serve in disguise and not seek fame, people's love, personal renown and reputation. Of course, the danger of love of power for people who have not yet attained any position is not in question and is directed at people for whom the ground for position and rank has been prepared and puts their religion in real jeopardy.

Poor Believers Are Light–burdened on the Day of Resurrection

After the Prophet (S) has warned against love of wealth and position, Abu Dharr

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.Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۹۲ -۱

:asks

O Prophet of Allah, does Allah give precedence to the fearful, lowly and submissive in" "?going to the Garden of bliss

After comprehending that the seekers of wealth and position are heading towards perdition, Abu Dharr imagines that Allah gives priority to the fearful and submissive; for this reason, he asks the Noble Prophet (S) in this regard and His Holiness refutes :him stating

The indigent among the Muslims will be led to paradise with their feet placed on the" shoulders of other people. Then, the treasurers of heaven will say, 'Stay in your places until your accounts are attended to.' They will respond, 'Why are we going to be held to account? We swear upon Allah that we did not have power to spend in Allah's way and embark upon discharging justice. Wealth which was granted to us was just enough to secure our needs so we could neither spend it nor be greedy with ".'it; but we worshipped Allah and in the end accepted his divine call

What is surprising is that in spite of the praise and extolment which religious sciences have heaped on values such as humility, modesty and keeping alive the praise of Allah, the Noble Prophet (S) does not mention the adorers of Allah as the leaders to the Garden of eternal bliss and instead states that the guides to paradise are people who protected their religion in spite of poverty and need and never relinquished .making the jihad, effort and fighting and/or acquisition of knowledge

Those

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ones will be led to the eternal Garden of bliss mounted on other people's shoulders; as if they want to fly. When it shall be said to them to wait until their accounts are attended to, they will reply that they did not have any government and power so as to select of our their own volition the course of civility with the people and discharge justice; we did not have any money to spend in Allah's way and/or be greedy with. What was expected of us was worship and obedience of Allah, which we did not .neglect at performing

Yes, they did not have any wealth to be answerable for lavish living and waste and/or negligence at helping other people. It is for this reason that their accounting does not take long, because if they had had wealth and had spent it in the way of right, even .then their accounting would not last long

With regard to the criticism which has been laid on the world and the dangers which are directed against man's religion from the realm of love of riches and rank, the Noble Prophet's (S) speech is comforting to the conscience for people who have no access to worldly riches and/or for the reason of discharging duties like knowledge and the jihad and fighting with the enemy, they did not manage to derive any benefit from the world. It is true that if man were to have possessions, he can spend it in the way of

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Allah by helping other people and use it at the service of Islam but a person who embarks upon acquisition of knowledge and/or being present at battlefronts and hence is encumbered in the acquisition of wealth and riches and spending it in the way of Allah still attains a higher position and status than a person who spends his possessions in the course of Allah because he sets aside as capital his wealth while the seeker of knowledge and the soldier at the battlefront expends as his capital his very being, his safety and ease in the way of Allah and values which such a person .attains are higher than the produce of other people

When man at the end of the war returns from the battlefront empty-handed and sees those unfamiliar with war and the jihad have acquired enormous wealth for themselves, have built magnificent buildings for themselves and consequently have brought to hand all the amenities for their feasting and drinking, it is likely that the Devil tempts him that you went to the battlefront and remained empty-handed with regard to the wealth of the world, but look at where the other people have reached! You went to the combat front and fought and got injured and/or lame and now no one values you nor is any one heedful of you and the other people have got posts and positions for themselves! This seduction of the Devil often produces effects in people of weak faith and gives rise to

.their regretting

Likewise, it is likely for people who embarked upon acquisition of religious education in theological schools to get tempted to think that what a great mistake they made! The other person went to university and got a suitable career after graduation and got colossal wealth under the auspices of his job but as a seminary student after thirty years of learning and I am still incapable of acquiring bread for my dinner! These seductions always come about for believers who are empty-handed in the world. It is for this reason that His Holiness with his words sets their hearts and minds at peace that if you have remained behind the caravan of the rich but still you have attained values which others have been deprived of and on the Day of Resurrection .they will envy your position

:In continuation, His Holiness states

O Abu Dharr! The world pre-occupies the lives and bodies of people. Allah, the" Magnificent and High, will hold us accountable over permitted conveniences more so ".with things which have been acquired by illicit means

Without the least doubt, in the acquisition of riches of the world bodily and energetic capital has to be expended. People who are occupied with work and acquisition of

wealth know this truth very well that sometimes man's problems are so numerous that they deprive man of the peaceful sleep of the night and he always thinks about checks and precious stones, selling and buying, inflation and deflation, debts and taxes and issues

p: ٢٢١

of this nature. In any case, a person who embarks upon acquisition of wealth has to strive hard whether he wants to acquire that wealth by permissible means or by illicit ways, because wealth does not easily come to hand. It is natural that individual does .not find a single opportunity for worship and meditation

He does not find the convenience to reflect about Allah, the Day of Resurrection and supplication to Allah. A person who has love of the world in the deepest recesses of his heart goes so far as to perform acts of worship as a means of attaining the world, he is never at peace from morning to night and if he wakes up at night to perform the night prayers, he requests for his daily income to be increased and his riches to get .colossal

Is there any intention more mean and infamous than that man should invoke Allah and worship Him for the sake of his stomach and material possessions? Worship which ought to be a means of attaining heaven and higher than that the good pleasure of Allah is set as a means of getting more bread, a better house and a more .luxurious car

In contrast, riches and poverty are the same for a heart which has been liberated from the world, ashes and purified gold make no difference in his perception. If we have no access to such people, the reality is that such people do indeed exist. There are People for

p: ٢٢٢

whom the litter in the dustbin is equivalent with a heap of bank notes and the only thing which is worth any value in their opinion is that which is employed in the way of

Allah. It is likely that man does not believe what he does not see, but I believe because :I have seen with my own eyes

About forty years ago I went to buy a self-cooker from a tradesman in the bazaar in Tehran with the intention of returning to Qum after buying all the other things which I needed. The attraction of that man so much captivated me that I stayed with him up to evening time and he kept giving me pieces of advice. In between the advice and recommendations, tears kept flowing from his eyes wetting the white beards on his .cheeks

He asked me, "What is the name of the first book which you study in the seminary?" I said, "Sharh Amthalih." He said, "What is written in the introduction of the book?" I said, "The beginning of knowledge is awareness of the High..." He said, "You have learnt that the beginning of knowledge is awareness of Allah!" He was talking while tears were pouring from his cheeks like drops of rain. In this pandemonium, his shop-boys were busy selling and he was inattentively getting the money and throwing it in .the cash box

When it was time for afternoon prayers, he arose with tearful eyes and went to the mosque and after the

prayers and eating lunch, I returned to his store and I stayed there until evening time .and kept listening to his advices

Yes, if love of the world is divested of man, heaps of money have no value to him and his heart belongs elsewhere. But if love of the world is embedded in man's heart, his heart belongs elsewhere even as he prays and his prayers too have worldly goal. Once the heart is occupied by love of position, man still plans to attain position even if he were to study mystics and he were acquainted with spiritual wayfaring and edification of character, and he incessantly thinks about attaining positions which others have not attained; in any case, he intends to gain predominance over the others. In reality, he does not intend to be Allah's slave. He is like the magicians of

India who after strenuous practice and effort attain powers to perform certain .miraculous works which other people are incapable of performing

The one who has been trained by Islam only intends to adore Allah and nothing else. Islam wants man whose spiritual striving and endeavor are for the good pleasure of Allah, even the wealth which he acquires is for the good pleasure of Allah. In the same way that Imam 'Ali ('a) used to care for date-trees until they gave fruit and dug wells .to supply water which he placed at the disposal of the people in the way of Allah

Therefore, we ought to try to reduce

p: ٢٢۴

our affection for the world. Of course, naturally the more material blessings are placed at the disposal of ordinary people, the more they get addicted to the world because once the graces of the world increase, their sweetness gradually settles on man's palate and increases man's inclination to the world. It is for this reason that people who chase after possessions and riches have heavy responsibilities and they will be held to account for every bit of their possessions, whether they acquired it .legally or illegally

In contrast to ordinary people, the saints [awliya'] of Allah do not in the least bit fall in love with the world no matter how abundant the graces at their disposal; of course, this kind of person is scarce. In the whole course of history people like Solomon have been very few who in spite of having all those countless blessings and a great .kingdom used to eat dry bread

Therefore, in regard to the invaluable recommendation of the Noble Prophet (S), it is better for man not to be pre-occupied with thoughts of acquiring wealth and riches and cleanse his heart from the contaminations of the world by means of worship and :adoration of Allah; as was Abu Dharr whom Imam 'Ali ('a) describes in this way

In the past I had a brother on the course of Allah whose contemptuous look on the" (worthless world made him look great in my eyes..."(١

Praising Contentment and Simple Living and Reproaching Covetousness

:In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet states

O Abu Dharr! I have“

p: ۲۲۵

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۲۲۵, short saying ۲۸۱, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

requested Allah to grant to those who love me only what is enough for their daily ”.subsistence and to increase the wealth and children of my enemies

As has already been mentioned, for most people the availability of a great deal of blessings gives birth to more affection and love for the world in their hearts. Therefore, it is better not to place a lot of facilities at their disposal and only to give them enough amenities to meet their basic needs so as to prevent them from being .contaminated by the world

That is why the Noble Prophet (S), as a result of compassion for his adherents, asks Allah to grant them enough only to meet their basic needs not to the extent where they will be led to extravagance and waste. In contrast, he asks Allah to increase the .wealth and progeny of his enemies

In reality, adding to the material capital of Allah is a divine practice derived from “the law of divine deception’, that is to say, Allah grants so much material and worldly blessings to the infidels that they get deceived by the world and become proud and as a result of their being drowned in the world, their disbelief and sin increases and as a result of this their punishment and requital in the hereafter multiplies and becomes .more tormenting. In addition to that, their worldly worries too multiply

For the enemies of Allah and his saints, there is no punishment higher than that as a

p: ۲۲۶

result of their drowning in the allurements of the world, they become deprived of

divine grace and their lonesomeness, deviation and disbelief increases. In this regard, Allah states:

وَلاَ يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ

"And let not those who disbelieve that Our granting them respite is better for their souls; We grant them respite only that they may add to their sins; and they shall have a disgraceful chastisement."(١)

In another place, He states:

فَلاَ تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلاَ أَوْلاَدُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الْحَيوةِ الدُّنْيا وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ

"Let not then their property and children excite your admiration; Allah only wishes to chastise them with these in the world's life and that their souls may depart while they are unbelievers."(٢)

In order for the believers not to set their eyes on the riches of the world and not to envy the enamored with the world, Allah states:

لاَ تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلى مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ وَلاَ تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"They would certainly say, 'Only our eyes have been covered over, rather we are an enchanted people'."(٣)

In response to a question about the meaning of 'Good', Imam 'Ali ('a) states:

"Good is not that your wealth and progeny should be much, but good is that your knowledge should be much, your forbearance should be great, and that you should vie with each other in worship of Allah. If you do good deeds you thank Allah, but if you commit

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١- Surat Al 'Imran ٣:١٧٨.

٢- Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah) ٩:٥٥.

.Surat al-Hijr ۱۵:۸۸ -۳

evil you seek the forgiveness of Allah. In this world, good is for two persons only: the man who commits sins but rectifies it and the man who hastens towards good (actions…"(۱)

Recommending Detachment from the World and Disinclination to It

:In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Happy are the ascetics in the world and people who have set their" hearts on the hereafter and have set the earth of Allah as their bedding and soil as their carpet and its water as their perfume. They have got attached to the Book of Allah as the undershirt gets attached to the body and supplication is like their outer ".shirts and they have disentangled and freed themselves from the world

Happy is the man who has no disposition to the world and only thinks about the afterworld, because they have knowledge of the world and where the real value lies. They are prepared to sit on the ground and sleep on the earth and for them the earth and expensive fine carpets are the same. In contrast, we, the infatuated by the world, are never ready to sit on the ground and feel ashamed when people see us sitting on the ground. We ought to give rise to this spirit in ourselves of perceiving the earth and fine carpets in the same light. If one day duty calls for it, we ought to humbly sit down .beside a poor man and comfort his heart without feeling ashamed

Ascetics never plan on certainly perfuming themselves with

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۱۰۵۸, wisdom [hikmat] ۹۲, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۱

expensive colognes, but clean and perfume themselves with water which flows from the earth. Their relationship with Allah is so strong that when they feel as if Allah is conversing with them during recitation of the Glorious Qur'an and/or when .supplicating, it seems as though they are saying the same word with Allah

They are living among the people and their faces are exposed to everyone but their hearts are elsewhere and their derivation of benefit from the world is tantamount to turning their backs towards it and they roll it up like a scroll. They have set their hearts on that which is with Allah because the world is fast-passing and heading towards .extinction

It has repeatedly been said that these instructional expressions do not imply that we ought to completely forsake Allah's graces and/or does not mean that the people who have worldly blessings at their disposal are essentially bad people. These explications .are meant to reduce our obsession with the world and see what the duty calls for

If duty calls for us to wear good clothes, mount a fine horse and do other things like that, we ought to do it because it is duty and is desirable by Allah. But if we chase after good things as result of our heart's wishes, we have set foot on a dangerous course and, whether we like it or not, we will be drawn towards actions which are not pleasing to Allah because the wishes of the heart

p: ٢٢٩

and the desires of Allah cannot be combined. The way of the heart and the desires of the carnal soul diverge from the course of adoration of Allah and never are they close .to each other

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَن اتَّخَذَ اِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ الله عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةٌ...

Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has" made him err having knowledge and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put (a covering over his eye..."(١

Therefore, these explanations intend to reduce our affection for the world. Encouragement that we ought to sit on the ground and not be obsessed with expensive carpets, decorations and luxurious living does not imply that we exert unnecessary hardships on ourselves and not derive any benefit from the benefits of Allah. A spiritual wayfaring Sufi asked Imam al-Sadiq ('a), "Why are you wearing this

fine cloth as if you are not 'Ali's ('a) child?" His Holiness' stated, "In the era of Imam 'Ali the people were living in poverty and want; for this reason, it was necessary for the Imam of the Muslims to live a simple life so that the people might not get dejected and depressed as a result of their poverty. But when the people are living in prosperity and abundance, the righteous are more entitled to derive benefit from graces than the others."

When the conditions necessitate, Muslims ought to pursue advancement in technology and

p: ۲۳۰

۱- Surat al-Jathiyah ۴۵:۲۳.

change in their ways of life so as to preserve the dignity of the Muslims in the face of the infidels. In addition, if the Muslims do not pursue progress, advancement and development in arts and technology which are needed in a civilized and advanced society, they will be obliged to extend their begging hands to the unbelievers and this will be a cause of lowliness for them.

From a social point of view, if the Islamic community intends to content itself with merely using hand tools and the basic needs of transport and arm themselves with poor weapons and abstain from creativity and ingenuity with the belief that an Islamic community ought to be a simple and contented society, it will certainly fall under the dominion of the infidels and it will become a lowly, base and mean society and Allah, the Beneficent, does not approve that a divine society should be a captive and in need of the infidels, because:

... وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلاً

"And Allah will by no means give the unbelievers a way against the believers."(۱)

And it is Him who has restricted honor to Allah and the Noble Prophet (S) and the believers:

... وَلِلّٰهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ...

"...and to Allah belongs might and to His Apostle and to the believers..."(2)

Considering that technological backwardness brings with it colonization and cultural invasion, endeavor in the direction of creativity and advancement of the Islamic ummah (community) is a divine duty which cannot be overlooked at whatever

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1- Surat al-Nisa ۴:۱۴۱.

2- Surat al-Munafiqun ۶۳:۸.

pretext.

The repeated recommendations which the Noble Prophet (S) and the rest of the Infallible Imams ('a) have given in regard to acquisition of knowledge and arts are a true witness of this assertion; the Noble Prophet (S) states, "Seek knowledge even if it is in China."(1) That is to say, the Muslims ought to learn every kind of knowledge which is needed in the Islamic community.

At the end of this section, His Holiness states:

"O Abu Dharr! The plantation of the hereafter is good works and the plantation of the world is wealth and children."

(If a person were a seeker of the hereafter, he ought to perform good works and if he were a seeker of the world, he ought to chase after saving money.)

Lesson ۱۷: The Effects of Crying for the Hereafter, the Broadness of a Believer's Heart and Piousness

point

Most of the Noble Prophet's (S) advices which have hitherto been examined have been rotating on three axes:

.Abstinence from love of the world and obsession with it .١

.Exhortation of invocation of Allah .٢

.Humility and modesty and crying as a result of fear of Allah .٣

In this section of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) once again explains the importance of crying as a result of fear of Allah and/or crying due to intense longing to perceive His beatific vision [liqa' Allah] and he embarks upon elucidating the importance of paying heed to the hereafter, keeping aloof from the world and curing the inner .conscience and abstaining from sanctimony

The Effects of Crying for the Hereafter

O Abu Dharr! The Lord has given me the news [saying], 'I swear upon My honor"

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ١, p. ١٧٧ -١

and glory that my slaves will never comprehend the reward of crying and its value. I have established palaces in the highest levels of paradise for those who shed tears ".'and no one will share it with them

As has been mentioned previously, the crying which the Noble Prophet has recommended is shedding tears as a result of fear of Allah and/or weeping due to the intensity of yearning to be admitted in the divine beatific presence of Allah. Even if these two sections of crying are desirable and play a vital role in awakening man and making heedful to Allah but still crying as a result of desiring to be admitted in the divine beatific presence of Allah is higher and calls for deep and profound knowledge which is not attainable save for a small group [among mankind], amongst the .(Infallibles ('a

Perceiving this fact that the saints [awliya'] of Allah ('a) and the Infallibles are enamored and in love with Allah and there is no pain for them comparable to the ache

of separation and remoteness from their Beloved, by examining the supplications of the Imams (‘a), we comprehend how much they used to weep and wail as a result of the pain of separation from their Beloved and how they used to hurt due to their .intense longing to be in the divine beatific presence of Allah

Supplications which have been narrated from Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) are a sign of the endless love of the

p: ۲۳۳

Infallible and Pure Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) in regard to Allah. With consideration to these supplications, a section of the unlimited awareness and knowledge of the Infallibles .becomes manifest to us

Knowledge which caused those of pure birth, of pure breastfeeding and the models of mankind not to become heedless of the presence of their Lord even for a single moment and for the reason that they used to perceive Him as higher than everything and believed that all things are under His power, they were only enamored by Him and this inner love-sickness would not for one moment leave them tranquil and calm. :Their supplications and invocations are themselves a sign of the pinnacle of this love

In Du‘a’ al-Kumayl, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) removes the curtain from his yearning to attain the divine beatific presence of Allah and believes that it is harder to bear remoteness :from Him than to bear the infernal hell and addresses his Lord thus

O Allah! My Lord and Master! I can bear your punishment, but how can I bear being“ ”?separated from Thee

And explaining his anguish in the case that he is separated from his Lord, he :continues

I swear upon Your glory O my Master! O my Lord! that if you lead me to hell with a“ speaking tongue, I will wail and weep so loudly and sorrowfully and I will shout very much, and like a person who has lost his beloved, I cry bitterly as a result of ”!remoteness from Thee

(Imam al-Sajjad ('a

p: ۲۳۴

:states in the Du'a' Abu Hamzah

I ruined my life with procrastinations of deeds and postponements of duties and with" protracted hopes and now I have reached a stage where I have completely been driven to despair with regard to edification of character [and purification of the soul]. Therefore, who is in a worse and more ruined state than mine? Woe upon me if in this state I get led to the grave, which I have not made ready for myself and have not made it fine with good works. Why ought I not to cry when I do not know what the consequences of my actions are and now my soul deceives me and my days beguile "?me regardless that death has cast its shadow on me

It is because of the evaluative role of crying in cleansing the inner conscience of ethical vices and shortcomings that the Noble Prophet (S) states that the virtue and reward which is derived from crying is more than what is derived without crying and .the people who cry shall attain stations which other people will not attain

:Abu Dharr asks who the most intelligent man is and the Noble Prophet (S) states

The most intelligent person is the one who thinks about death and prepares himself" ".for it more than anyone else

A person who has selected a course to traverse always sets his eyes on the destination if he is smart thinker and tries to arrive at the goal quicker. If a person becomes

p: ۲۳۵

inattentive along the way, becomes bewildered and perplexed along the way, he does not arrive at the destination in sound health. He who knows that the world is only a means of attaining the hereafter does not get deceived by the material attractions of .the earth and incessantly meditates about death and prepares himself for it

Therefore, when his death draws nigh, he goes to Allah with full hands and overflowing provisions but people who lose sight of the goal have not prepared produce and provisions for the hereafter setting out on a long journey without .provisions and necessities which is a very hard job

The Broadness of a Believer's Heart and Its Signs

".O Abu Dharr! If the light shines in the heart, it becomes broad and spacious"

In the beginning, hearts are dark, then Allah adds His light to them and hearts become apt to receive that light. Once that light settles down, the heart's capacity to broaden increases. To cite an intelligible example, it is like a dry water-skin which expands when water is poured inside it and/or like a bladder which the more air they pump in it the more it enlarges. Therefore, a heart which has been broadened by the light of Allah has an increased capacity. (The purport of heart is not the piece of flesh beating in our hearts, but heart in this discourse denotes a spiritual essence and a place of (.perception and the station of faith

Perhaps His Holiness' (S) intention is that the excessiveness of remembering death and preparedness to meet it

p: ۲۳۶

keeps the light of man's life burning and as a result of remembrance of death, a light is set in man's soul which does not let his pure natural disposition get contaminated by the darkness of sin and it is as a result of that same light that, in the words of the Noble Prophet (S), broadens and increases the capacity of man's soul in this sense that he perceives beyond this narrow world and concentrates on the everlasting .afterworld

For the reason that such a state is not intelligible to Abu Dharr, because this is not a matter susceptible to the senses so as to be felt by the physical senses, he asks the Noble Prophet (S) about the signs of a large heart. In response, His Holiness (S) cites :three signs of this state

The first sign of a broad heart is longing for the hereafter, in this sense that man .۱ overlooks the transient and perishable world and sets his eyes on the eternal world of the hereafter. In explanation of the meaning of 'anabah' (returning from committing sins and going back to Allah), the deceased Raghib Isfahani states, "Returning ".towards Allah implies going back to Him by means of repentance and good works

.The second sign of a large heart is abstaining from the deceiving world .۲

Once a believer concentrates on the everlasting world, he becomes vexed by this narrow world, which is why he detaches himself from the world and prepares to .depart from it

The House of

Pride [dar al-ghurur] is one of the names by which the world is called in the Glorious Qur'an. Pride denotes deception and trickery and because adornments and ornaments of the world deceive man and make him infatuated with it; that is why it is .called the House of Pride

Explaining the deception of the world, eminent people like 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may he reside in Allah's Garden of bliss, used to state that man has a natural object of desire, that is to say man's natural disposition has a lost treasure it is always trying to find. His primary destination is becoming close to Allah and in other words, attaining .absolute perfection

Even if he himself is not conscious of this but unconsciously he still moves towards absolute perfection. But sometimes he loses his main aim and as a result of this mistake selects the world as his main goal; in reality, he has become seduced by the adornments and ornaments of the world and imagines them to be his lost treasure; that is to say the world presents itself as the real goal and desirable object of desire .for man

As a result of this, he attains the world after a life of struggle and effort only to find

out that it was not his natural object of desire and does not satiate his spiritual needs. For this reason, the world can be compared to the nipple of a breast-feeder which once put in the mouth of a hungry child

p: ٢٣٨

longing for breast milk will make it forget the mother's breast and finally realizes that .the breast-feeder does not satiate his need for his mother's milk

Yes, the world is nothing more than a mirage and the real object of man's desire is life giving water which springs from proximity to Allah and satiates his natural disposition. Even if he imagines the world to be his real object of desire—whether it is worldly ostentation in the form of a house and car or in the form of other earthly pleasures and attractions—but it has to be understood that with all its spaciousness and various gratifications and blessings, all are a means for attaining absolute perfection and the .good pleasure of Allah, not the ultimate goal and natural object of desire

We conclude that a person whose heart is in chaotic darkness and has not been enlightened by the light of faith, heedlessness and darkness get erased from his soul and he clearly discerns the truth and does not fall into error. He only sets his heart on the hereafter and it is not possible, even for a moment, to give his heart to the world .because he knows that the world is not the right place to fall in love

.The third sign of a large heart is to get ready for death before handing over his soul .٣

When man is not obsessed with the world and is always meditating about the hereafter, he always has to be ready to

p: ٢٣٩

go back to the eternal Abode and attain his natural Object of desire. A person who knows that he has not been created for the world and the world is only a bridge of passage to the everlasting Abode zealously looks forward to the moment of gaining proximity to the divine presence of Allah. He impatiently tries to cross the bridge so as .to attain his ultimate goal

A state of impatience and hurriedness to attain the goal also appears for man in the world. Along the way as man is traveling in a car to a city, he wishes to arrive at the destination quicker. When his car overtakes all the other moving objects on the road, he becomes happy that he will arrive earlier than the others at the destination. Even if this is a childish fancy it still has its roots in man's natural disposition. When he knows that the destination is another place and he has no role to play in choosing the course and path, he tries to traverse the course faster so as to reach the goal which of .course is a reasonable matter

Therefore, a slave whose heart has become enlightened by Allah's light and whose eyes have become opened to the truth knows that the ultimate goal is the vicinity of the Truth and proximity to the divine presence of Allah and that the world is nothing more than a means; for this reason, he employs this means in order to arrive at the

destination and does not become calm as a result of yearning to arrive and longing to .meet the Beloved, to the extent that he forgets the world altogether

Piousness and Fleeing from Sanctimony and Hypocrisy

:Warning Abu Dharr against hypocrisy and sanctimony, the Noble Prophet states

O Abu Dharr! Fear Allah but do not sanctimoniously manifest your dread of Allah to" the people with the intention of attracting their respect while your heart meditates ".about performing sin

Hypocrisy denotes man manifesting his outward better than his inside and making :apparent what is contrary to that which is hidden in the inner soul. That is to say

,[His appearance resembles Abu Dharr and Salman [Farsi

.His inner soul resembles Abu Sufyan

Sanctimony is considered as hidden polytheism and a sanctimonious person is called a .polytheist

One of the great graces of Allah concealing man's sins and faults, as a result of which He has been called 'the Hider of Faults' [sattar al-'uyub]. In truth, life would become unbearable if the vices of people were divulged and they perceived the faults of one another. It is for this reason that Allah's concealing of defects is a great blessing for :which being thankful is incumbent. Imam 'Ali ('a) states

If you were to perceive the secrets of one another, you would never bury one" (another."(١

In the same way that Allah Himself conceals the faults of the believers, he does not give permission to the others to reveal the sins of other people; neither does He Himself discredit a believer nor does He allow a believer to

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٧, p. ٣٨۵ -١

disgrace himself. Therefore, man has no right to divulge his sins to other people. It has been recorded in a hadith that Allah has not allowed the believers to demean and debase themselves; naturally there is no meanness worse than sinning and corruption; it is for this reason that as soon as a believer sins, Allah sets a covering over that sin and does not allow the sinner himself to remove the covering from his sin .and gives him the opportunity to repent

Of course, this is not a general rule, because sometimes on the basis of His wisdom and in order to discipline people, Allah, the Exalted, divulges a bit of their sins and removes the covering from their secrets. Revealing their secrets is a means of training them. That is to say, in the case that he does not get corrected no matter how much he is warned and cautioned over his ugly works, the best way to awaken and train him is to disgrace him a bit so as to prevent him from committing further vices. Of course, this is an existential matter and is related to Allah and His control and no .man has the right to disgrace others on the pretext of correcting them

Therefore, from the Islamic perspective no person has the permission to disgrace

neither himself nor other people; concealing and hiding personal defects is a duty of all the believers. Sometimes, the punishment of divulging sins is higher than sin itself and revealing sins

p: ٢۴٢

:is considered as one of the delicate instances of spreading corruption

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَهُ فِى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِى الدُّنْيا وَالآخِرَهِ وَاللهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ

Surely (as for) those who love that scandal should speculate respecting those who" believe, they shall have a grievous chastisement in this world and the hereafter, and (Allah knows, while you do not know."(١

Like scandal-mongering, sanctimony and outward adornment too is an ugly thing; it is unacceptable for man to portray himself as better than how he actually is. In spite of being a sinner and wrong-doer, he tries to portray himself as a man of piety, faith, fear of Allah and supplication and invocation so that the people may accord him .respect

Shaddad ibn Aws and 'Ibadah ibn Samit narrate that in interpretation of the ayat, "Say: I am a mortal like you; it is revealed to me that your god is one God, therefore whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and not join anyone in the :service of his Lord"(٢), the Noble Prophet (S) states

(A person who prays and fasts out of sanctimony and hypocrisy is a polytheist."(٣"

The Intention and Its Role in the Evaluation of Works

O Abu Dharr! Make an intention for every one of your works, even eating and" ".sleeping

From the viewpoint of edification of character, mentioning this matter is very important and constructive and in addition, this matter is founded on a very important scientific and philosophical axiom which calls for detailed discussion. The value of every work

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.Surat al-Nur ۲۴:۱۹ -۱

.Surat al-Kahf ۱۸:۱۱۰ -۲

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸۴, p. ۲۴۸ -۳

which man discharges, even worship and adoration of Allah, is related to the intention: the evaluation of one action performed as a result of two differing intentions is not the .same

A person who accepts his friend's invitation positively does a praiseworthy work, but his action is considered as worship which gives fruit to reward and profit if he accepts the invitation and goes to the house of his friend with the intention to please Allah because Allah is pleased to see the believers accepting the invitations of their fellow .[believing brothers [and having good relations

Or, he is fasting a recommendable fast and one of his friends, ignorant of this fact, invites him to partake of food; in the case that he breaks his fast for the sake of pleasing Allah, his action is considered as worship and gives fruit to divine reward and profit; but if he breaks his fast for the reason that he is pleased with the food and longs for it, his action has no reward because it was not done for the good pleasure of Allah. Therefore, this very eating has divine reward and profit if it is done for the sake of pleasing Allah and has an invaluable role in the perfection and spiritual ascendance .of man

Therefore, heed has to be paid to this fact that man can discharge all his daily works, starting from trivial actions such as sleeping, eating, looking, and even joking up to the more important actions such

as prayer and fasting for the good pleasure of Allah in the case that they are .discharged in the direction of servitude and obedience of Allah

Some of the great people used to pause a while before doing anything they wanted to do until they got sure that their intention was purely for the good pleasure of Allah and they were certain that the work has been performed for Allah. Or, if a question was asked of them, they never responded with haste and before reflecting a little and purifying the intention in their hearts. Then, they used to give the response for the .good pleasure of Allah

This point is indicative of the fact that a believer can be so smart and sharp that he can make every single moment of his lifespan in the course of Allah and His good pleasure. Therefore, it is as well possible to have a pure and correct intention in regard to pleasures of the flesh, actions which both give pleasure and are acts of .worship at the same time

Man can attain both the pleasures of the world and the gratifications of the hereafter. In such instances a medium between the world and the hereafter is possible. It is in cases that there is incompatibility between two actions that a medium cannot be found, for example between the obligatory [wajib] works and the forbidden [haram] actions for which a medium is impossible. But if man has a divine intention in doing permissible actions, he

p: ۲۴۵

attains both the pleasure of this world thereby increasing his bodily energy and vigor and brings to hand divine reward and profit. Of course, the divine intention itself has stages and one of its stages is a firm decision to abstain from sin and quit .disobedience of Allah's will

The deceased 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may he reside in Allah's Garden of bliss, used to narrate that whenever Imam 'Ali ('a) woke up to pray the optional night prayers [nafilah], he used to take a cold bath in order to increase his physical vigor and .preparedness

It is natural for a person such as Imam 'Ali ('a) who from morning to night was at the battlefront or was busy doing some other social duties in addition to performing five

hundred and/or one thousand rak'ats of prayer to be exhausted and not to have enough energy and vigor for waking up at night to pray. It is for this reason that .taking a cold bath increases his energy, vigor and liveliness

Lesson ١٨: Honoring the Divine Majesty and Splendor of Allah

point

O Abu Dharr! The majesty and splendor of the Lord of creation ought to increase and" do not remember Him lightly as do the ignorant and unenlightened who when they ".'see the dog and pig say, 'O Allah! Suffocate and choke it to death

The Status of Invocation of Allah in the Qur'an and the Hadiths

The subject of discourse in this section is remembrance of Allah and honoring His majesty. A great deal of importance has been accorded to invocation of Allah in the Glorious Qur'an and hadiths, to the extent that topics like

p: ٢۴۶

incentives for remembrance of Allah, the worldly and heavenly benefits of invocation of Allah, the quantity and quality of imploration of Allah, the place and time of .supplication of Allah have all been examined in detail

Likewise, explications have been made by the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and religious scholars with regard to which one between invocation with words and invocation with the heart is more important and higher and/or which one is better between supplication in .secret solitude and imploration in a public and populous place

:In one hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

There has not been a nation and people who gathered and forsook invoking Allah" ".and remembering us save that they will reap regret on the Day of Resurrection

:And he also stated

(Remembrance of us is tantamount to remembrance of Allah."(١"

Explicating the importance of invocation and remembrance of Allah, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"Holy and glorified is your Lord; Allah who is the Mighty and Matchless and is remote from the ignorant description of creatures, and peace and blessings of Allah be upon the prophets ('a), and praise is especially reserved for Allah who is the Creator of the world."(2)

Therefore, man has to always preserve a state of remembrance of Allah on his tongue and in his heart and this invocation is not confined to a special place, gathering and time. It has been recorded in a sacredly inspired hadith that Prophet Moses ('a) asked, "O My Lord! I feel shy to invoke Your name with my tongue in certain places and

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1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۲, p. ۴۶۸, Beirut print.

2- Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ۴, p. ۲۵۴, hadith ۳.

states and hence to remember You." Allah stated, "Invoking My Name in every state is good."

All these emphases and recommendations to remember and invoke the divine name of Allah are in regard to the role which they play in keeping man aloof from ethical vices and shortcomings and propelling him towards prosperity and well-being, because man abstains from issues which are not compatible with the good pleasure of Allah and he withholds the soul from disobedience if he is always preoccupied with the invocation of Allah and perceives himself as being in the divine presence of Allah.

All the problems and errors which occur as a result of seductions of the carnal soul and the Devil are caused by negligence of invocation of Allah and His punishment and requital. In addition to that, forgetfulness of Allah darkens the heart and consequently the Devil and carnal soul overcome man. In contrast, remembrance and recollection of the divine presence of Allah gives rise to the cleansing and purification of the soul

from vices and man's liberation from the shackles of the appetitive soul. In that case, the heart becomes a manifestation of the Beloved and love of the world, which is the fountainhead of all errors and deviations, departs from the soul.

In a hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states:

"Know that the best and the most proper of your works before Allah and the most sublime of them in your levels and the best thing on which the sun shines is invocation

of Allah, because Allah has thus stated with regard to Himself, 'I am a Companion of one who remembers Me'."(۱)

In another hadith, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states:

"The Honored and Glorified Allah states, 'I grant to whoever lags behind at asking issues in regard to Me because of invocation more than I grant to the one who asks with respect to Me'."(۲)

Allah told Prophet Jesus ('a):

"O Jesus! Remember Me in solitude so that I may remember you before Myself, and remember Me in a group of men so that I may remember you in a group better than that of men (ie the angels). O Jesus! Soften your heart for Me and remember Me abundantly in solitude and know that what pleases Me is your submission in respect to Me. Keep your heart alive for this work and do not be dead (i.e. sad and dejected)."(۳)

The emphasis of the Qur'an and its attention to invocation of Allah has reached the extent that prayer in the Qur'an has been introduced as invocation of Allah, with regard to the fact that in Islam prayer has a high status and has been known as a pillar of religion:

... وَأَقِمِ الصَّلوةَ لِذِكْرِى

"... and keep up prayer for My remembrance."(۴)

For the reason the aim is more important than the means, it can be inferred from this verse that invocation of Allah is more important than prayer and in truth prayer is a means of remembering Allah; (in reality, from the viewpoint of the Qur'an, invocation

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.Iddah al-Wa'i, p. ۲۳۸' -۱

.Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ۴, p. ۲۶۱, hadith ۱ -۲

.Ibid., p. ۲۶۴, hadith ۳ -۳

.Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۱۴ -۴

of Allah has a purport and reality for which prayer, in spite of all the value it has, is considered as nothing more than a means.) The question is that how possible is it for what embodies all the invocations and even some of the ayats and special works and ?movements to be a means of remembrance of Allah

In explanation of this point, it ought to be said that prayer is not considered as invocation of Allah because of the shape and form and movements and activities which it has but invocation is a condition of the heart and is an inward attention and is a connection between the heart of man and the divine Essence of Allah. Therefore, man prays so as to give rise to that attention of the heart and inward connection. Therefore, prayer is itself a means and the goal is attention and connection of the .heart which is doubtlessly more honorable than prayer itself

The Quantity and Quality of Invocation of Allah

One of the issues mentioned in the Qur'an and the hadiths is the quality and quantity of Allah. Some verses in the Qur'an lay emphasis on the quantity and abundance of :invocation of Allah; like the verse

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا

(O you who believe! Remember Allah, remembering frequently..."(۱"

(.In this ayat emphasis has been laid on the abundance of invocation)

It has been recorded in some of the hadiths that there is a determined limit for everything, even for prayer too there is a fixed limit: it has

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.Surat al-Ahzab ۳۳:۴۱ -۱

been made incumbent upon every adult person competent to undertake religious duties to pray seventeen rak'ats in five turns a day and it is recommended to optionally pray twice the number of obligatory rak'ats per day, or the incumbency of the hajj (pilgrimage to the House of Allah) once in a life time upon every adult and economically able person. Therefore, there is a limit specified for everything, except the invocation and remembrance of Allah for which there is no limit. However, much .man invokes the divine name of Allah, it is still insufficient

In contrast to the first section of the ayats and hadiths, there is a section of the verses of the Qur'an and hadiths which lay stress on the quality of invocation of the divine :name of Allah, amongst them the verse

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُم مَنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاَذْكُرُوا اللهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا...

So when you have performed your devotions, then laud Allah as you lauded your" (fathers, rather a greater lauding..."(۱

It is not commanded in this ayat to invoke Allah a lot, but it states that invoke Allah greater [or more intensely]. Therefore, the frequency and infrequency of invocation of Allah is not under consideration but rather its weakness and strength and this is related to neither invocation with words nor invocation by the tongue. The purport is .not to thicken or weaken the words of invocations, but the attention of the heart

At the footnote of this verse, the deceased 'Allamah Tabataba'i states that the custom of

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.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۰۰ -۱

the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance was to engage in praising and lauding their fathers after the hajj in the area of Mina. But after the advent of Islam, Allah gave orders that this custom should be brought to an end and invocation of Allah should take its place.

In this verse, invocation has been described as strong; this makes it known that in the same way that the amount of invocation of Allah is capable of increasing, it is also capable of strengthening in regard to quality. In addition, invocation of Allah is not a matter of words, but of the heart and is performed with the presence of heart and words are its explanation.(۱)

All too often, we confine invocation of Allah to the tongue [and words], when invocation of Allah is recommended, we imagine that invocation implies [just] saying 'al-hamdulillah' and the Four Praises [tasbihat-i arba'ah] and others of this kind; in the case that all these words are indicative of invocation and in reality the imploration which has been emphasized and recommended is that which goes with remembrance and attention of the heart.

That is to say, man ought to be mindful of Allah at the time of performing duties and obligations, so that he may discharge his duties along with perceiving His divine presence and also at the time of abstaining from sin, man ought to remember Allah so that the perception of Him may cause his forsaking sin.

The connection between invocation of

.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۲, p. ۸۱ -۱

Allah by words and invocation by the tongue and the relationship between the word and the meaning is like the relationship of the skin of the fruit with its core. In reality, invocation by words is a dress for invocation by the heart and invocation by the heart

.is the core of the fruit

Therefore, invocations by words are a pre-requisite to the remembrance of Allah by the heart and inner soul and have to certainly be an object of attention. It is for this reason that the numbers and instances of invocations have been specified, like the .supplications which have been specified as the invocations after prayer

The Relationship between Invocation with Words and Invocation with the Heart

It is necessary here to give more explanations in regard to the relationship between invocation with words and invocation with the heart and also to demonstrate why so much emphasis has been laid on imploration of Allah, to the extent that it has been put forward as the goal of prayer. Basically, what role does invocation of Allah have in the life, prosperity and perfection of man? Do those who do not invoke Allah in their ?lives and are not attentive to Him earn less in life and fail

When we speak and utter words on the tongue, we have imagined a meaning for that word previously and our aim of speaking is to make known and comprehensible to the others that meaning. Usually, speaking is for the reason of presenting the purport and intention even if sometimes the meaning of words and

speaking is not to show a purport but to suggest special psychological issues and offer .private spiritual instruction

One of the recommendations which psychologists and psychotherapists have emphasized in connection with their work is private spiritual instruction, for which, of course, they have selected special words and phrases, so that private instruction may produce effects; like when they say that you ought to sit in solitude and raise your voice to a specified level and repeat a particular sentence [for a stipulated number of times] so as to be effective in the soul. These instances are exceptional and usually man conceives a meaning when he speaks and then after presents it to the other people. A reasonable person does not say anything without visualizing the meaning .and intention of their words, because words are indicative of meanings

At the time of pronouncing invocations with words, like the Four Praises [tasbihat-i arba'ah], for which we imagine the meaning and this word is indicative and suggestive of that intention, the intention is not to inculcate that meaning to Allah, the Exalted, and/or the angels and other people, because we have no intention of conversation and dialogue but we want that meaning to have an effect in our hearts. Therefore, the effect is derived from the meaning and the words are nothing more than just a .means

When we say Allah-u Akbar (Allah is Great), and we take it as a divine work, our intention is the effects of the meaning of that invocation in the

soul of man and his prosperity, otherwise words and letters devoid of meaning are nothing but sounds which emerge out of the tongue, it is for this reason that .meaningful words have to be used in invocation of Allah

We conclude that before uttering invocation with words, a preparatory level of remembrance of Allah appears in man, thereafter a higher level of invocation of the divine name of Allah appears. When man is reciting invocations of Allah, he initially is reminded of Allah; (otherwise, if he completely becomes negligent of Allah, he does not undertake to invoke the divine name of Allah); no matter how weak man's attention might be, he becomes aware of Allah before invocation of the name of Allah and thereafter recites an invocation which is indicative of the remembrance of Allah. .Therefore, before invocation of Allah a level of the remembrance of Allah appears

Two Benefits of Invocation with Words

The first benefit and goal of invocation of Allah with words is to strengthen that weak stage of remembrance of Allah so that man's attention may be fixed on Allah. In the beginning, he had an obscure attention or his attention was scattered but with the help of invocation with words, especially prayer, that attention becomes strong, concentrated and directed at Allah; this is one of the benefits which can be cited for .invocation

The second benefit of invocation with words is that if that weak level of invocation of Allah with words does not become strong, at least it becomes permanent and

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does not disappear. Man's states and attentions, amongst them the remembrance of Allah, are always in a state of change and transformation and in the danger of disappearing. It is for this reason that the help of invocation with words has to be sought for the permanence and continuity of that attention of the heart, so that they do not forget the remembrance of Allah. Therefore, two benefits and aims can be cited for invocation of the divine name of Allah and of course the first benefit and goal .is higher and better

Sometimes, it happens that invocation of Allah with words produces no benefits and that occurs in the case that it becomes and idle habit and futile utterances of the tongue to which man pays no attention, like the rest of the habits of the tongue and actions which people exude without the least attention to that habit. Some people continually turn the prayer beads without paying the least attention to the praises they are reciting and their benefit. Or some people who have become accustomed to playing with their fingers and/or beards and moustaches. In regard to habits of the tongue, some children get accustomed to making certain words involuntarily flow on .their tongues without paying the least attention to them

For most of us reciting supplications and invocations has become a dry habit and we do not pay the least attention to the purport of what we recite. It is for this reason that they do not give

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rise to any effect and transformation in our hearts. It is possible that we initially begin an action and start reciting an invocation with attention, as we have heard in a hadith that for example that reciting the invocations of Fatimah ('a) or a certain other invocation brings to hand a certain amount of reward, for this reason we begin reciting this invocation with attention of the heart initially but gradually our attention

decreases to the extent that those words become uttered out of habit and without any attention to it. Of course, saying invocations like 'Allah-u Akbar (Allah is Great)', 'La ilaha illa Allah (There is no god save Allah)', even without attention, is better than pronouncing vain and ugly words but they still do not give rise to a desirable spiritual .effect

There have been people who did not have the least belief in God but used to mention the name of God out of habit and this action has become a form of custom among them. There were communists here in Iran who did not have the least belief in Allah and the transcendental cosmos but at the time of separating, according to habit and custom, and out of respect for one another, used to say, 'khuda-hafiz (may God be your protector)' without paying the least attention to its meaning. In the same way that pronouncing the name of Allah has become a habit and custom for some of us the Muslims, and we do not pay the

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.least attention to its meaning and purport

Among the Ignorant Arabs and likewise the Arabs who lived at the advent of Islam and had recently reverted to Islam, it was a very prevalent custom among them to pronounce the name of Allah. Whenever they saw a dog or pig, they used to say, "May Allah suffocate or choke it" without having the least attention to the meaning and purport of the words. This was just a habit which was devoid of conviction of the heart. Certainly, these words do not leave any impression in man and are not .considered as remembrance of Allah

In this hadith, the Noble Prophet advises Abu Dharr that when you want to praise and glorify Allah, first imagine His greatness and majesty. Remember that the name of Allah, who is the Creator of the whole world and in whose powerful Hands lie everything, has unlimited greatness and glory in the same way that He himself has boundless greatness and glory. It is for this reason that He ought to be remembered with greatness and glory. This occurs in the case that your heart and soul perceives the greatness of Allah, as a result of which you pronounce His name with humility and

submissiveness. You ought not to be like those Ignorant people who used to pronounce the name of Allah without paying the least attention to the meaning.

Invocation leaves an effect in the heart and soul of man, becomes the cause of tranquility and

the goal of performing the prayers, the cause of man's spiritual ascendance and growth of the soul, and becomes the cause of forsaking vain materialistic thoughts and looking forward to the eternal world and the encompassing blessings of Allah, becomes the cause of a strong connection between man and Allah which is pronounced with attention to the meaning and purport of the invocation and keeping in mind the divine presence of Allah. This is that same invocation in praise of which Allah says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ...

"Those only are believers whose hearts become full of fear when Allah is mentioned..."(۱)

At the end there is room for us to quote the words of Imam 'Ali's ('a) description in regard to the standard of the invocation and remembrance of Allah:

"I have seen the companions of the Prophet (S) but I do not find anyone resembling them. They begun the day with dust on the hair and face (in hardships of life) and passed the night in prostration and standing in prayers. Sometimes, they put down their forehead and sometimes their cheeks. With the recollection of their resurrection it seemed as though they stood on live coal. It seemed that in between their eyes there were signs like knees of goats, resulting from long prostrations. When Allah was mentioned, their eyes flowed freely till their shirt collars were drenched. They trembled for fear of punishment and hope of reward as the tree trembles on a stormy day."(۲)

.Surat al-Anfal ۸:۲ -۱

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۲۸۶, sermon [khutbah] ۹۶, trans. Fayd al-Islam -۲

Lesson ۱۹: The Greatness of Allah's Status in the Viewpoint of the Angels

point

O Abu Dharr! Allah has angels who as a result of fear of Him have their heads" permanently bowed [in submission] while standing on their feet up to the Day of Resurrection. Then they all say, 'Purity and praise are for you, we did not worship you ".as you deserved to be adored

We have previously discussed invocation and remembrance of Allah. It has been said that invocation of Allah ought to be done as a result of humility, modesty and with the presence of heart; not as a result of habit and futile utterances of the tongue. Now, the discourse regards what things play a role in bringing about attention and presence of heart at the time of invocation of the divine name of Allah. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) embarks upon explicating the point which has excellent effects in bringing about attention to Allah and perceiving his divine .presence at the time of invocation of the name of Allah

The Role of Arousing Hope and Fear

In a natural way, man's motivation in regard to volitional works is hope for reward and fear of harm; of course the realm of reward and harm is very wide: for some people the reward lies in these same worldly benefits and material facilities and for some people reward and benefit belong to the hereafter. In the same way, some material and worldly losses are taken into consideration and for some people losses and divine punishment of the hereafter are taken into consideration. Higher than these

two types, for the saints [awliya'] of Allah, reward lies in perceiving the presence of Allah and deriving benefit and the pleasure of Allah and their loss lies in being

.deprived of that prosperity and perfection

Their fear is in respect to being deprived of the beatific presence of Allah and without the least doubt this fear is more than the fear of other people in regard to the losses of the world and the hereafter is higher. Of course, the reality of this issue is not known to us and is far from our comprehension; we briefly deduce from the ayats [verses of the Qur'an] and hadiths there is such fear as well. (We hope Allah, the Exalted, will grant us the grace and aptitude to perceive this meaning by means of (.(deriving benefit from the enlightening words of the Ahl al-bayt ('a

For every reason fear of Allah and/or fear of harm which appears by means of man himself and can be repelled by Allah causes man to attain deeper attention and in the same way eagerness for reward and profit and that which Allah grants to His slave, or eagerness for being in the beatific divine presence also gives rise to more attention .and presence of heart

Even if for a lot of people fear plays a greater role in arousing and compelling them to action and freeing them from negligence and making them perceive the danger and harm. Every person can test himself as to whether they

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become more impelled to take action by listening to fearful news which foretells extra .danger and harm for them or hope and reward

For us endeavor to repel harm is more important than attracting reward. Perhaps, this very point has become the cause that the Glorious Qur'an pays more heed to warning and premonition than it does to giving good news and tidings and the prophets (S) have been introduced as warners. In some ayats the prophets ('a) have :been introduced as both warners and givers of glad tidings, like the ayat

... فَبَعَثَ اللهُ النَّبِيّينَ مُبَشِّرينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ...

(So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners..."(١..."

And very few instances are found where the Prophets ('a) have been introduced as bearers of good tidings [bashir or mubashshir] but the title of warners [nadhir] has been employed alone in a lot of instances, like the verse:

تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ

"Almost bursting for fury; whenever a group is cast into it, its keeper shall ask them: did there not come to you a warner?"(٢)

(Emphasis on the prophets ('a) being warners is because their warnings leave more effect in the hearts of the people than their glad tidings.)

Fear of Allah is one of the states having a lot of benefits for man, especially if it becomes a stable habit and as has been mentioned, one of its benefits and effects is remembrance and deep attention to Allah. Even if there is no

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١- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:٢١٣.

٢- Surat al-Mulk ۶٧:٨.

room for delving in this discourse deeper, but still we will hint at certain issues in order to bring about more comprehension of the hadiths which have been narrated in regard to fear of Allah and also bringing about a deeper effect of fear of Allah in the heart and soul.

The Essence of Fear and Dread of Allah

One of the questions which are treated is what the reality of fear is and what causes play a role in giving rise to it and what effects does it leaves behind? Do fear and awe differ from one another? These discussions largely involve lexical aspects; in order to comprehend fear and awe of Allah and the difference between these two, a lot of ayats and hadiths will be discussed. With regard to the application of fear and awe in the ayats and hadiths, there is no considerable difference to be noticed and in some instances these two have been used interchangeably.

Once man has perceived and felt the greatness of Allah, a feeling of self-abasement, servility, humility and modesty appears in him. This state and psychological reaction has been embedded in the nature of man. (Of course, this state and reaction is not confined to man, the other living creatures also have this feeling vis-à-vis those that are stronger than them.) Usually, this state is also called awe and in reality fear is employed in place of awe. When man perceives the greatness of another one, even if he poses no danger and harm to him, he feels

.in himself the feeling of humility and lowliness, as if he has lost his being

Sometimes, fear denotes fear of harm which is directed at man—usually fear has been used in this sense—naturally the application of fear in regard to Allah implies dread of the divine retribution and requital which are likely to be earned as a result of .man's bad works

With regard to the saints [awliya'] of Allah and people who have attained higher levels of servitude and obedience of Allah, their fear sometimes arises as a result of paying heed to the majesty of Allah and sometimes due to the possibility of being deprived of the beatific vision of Allah [liqa' Allah] because the beatific vision of Allah and presence in his divine realm is not a definite and certain matter and is likely to either disappear .or never occur at all

Therefore, attention to this meaning causes the appearance of fear of Allah in the saints [awliya'] of Allah because the honor of being in the beatific presence of Allah and being accepted in His divine presence is the greatest perfection and prosperity and man's hope is to attain divine knowledge and the greatest gratification for him is feeling that he is in the presence of Allah. A bit further than that level, we perceive how much the happiness of Allah brings pleasure to faith. A friend who feels that his beloved is happy and pleased with him fears lest he becomes deprived of that ,happiness

.pleasure and love of his beloved

This is the highest kind of fear and dread for a person who has attained love. Lower than that is fear as a result of divine retribution and requital of the hereafter which is .the meaning intended in most of the ayats and hadiths

This stage plays an intermediary role for attaining higher levels because for us who up to now have not attained higher levels of awareness, this medium level of fear of Allah becomes the cause of our being heedless to the world and its pleasures and is itself a cause for abstaining from sins and keeping aloof from worldly contaminations; of course, this is not a small thing that in man exists an inward cause for abstaining .and fleeing from obsession with the world and sins

For people who have low objectives, fear of Allah denotes dread of worldly problems and encumbrances. Fear lest Allah inflicts them with disease, or lest they lose their dignity and become lowly, and lose the respect of people and/or fear lest they lose their beloved one. (For people who have faith in Allah, dread of becoming entangled in problems and afflictions and dejections is a kind of fear of Allah and in short is (.desirable and most of the prophets' ('a) warnings intend this type of fear of Allah

The Benefit and Status of Fear of Allah

This discussion concerns the desirability and benefits of fear of Allah. What value and benefit has fear of Allah got so as to be so much recommended that

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man ought to endeavor to attain the station of fear and know its course? The reality is that a lot of people have not comprehended the good qualities and benefits of fear. Even if they know that a lot of verses of the Qur'an have been revealed in regard to fear of Allah and that people who are fearful of Allah have been praised but still they do not know what benefit and gain there is in fear of Allah. Once mention of the states of fear of the prophets ('a) and the saints [awliya'] of Allah and the front-men of religion is made, they surprisingly ask as to why ought man to be so fearful and cry so ?!much that his eyes get damaged and gus face injured

It has been narrated in regard to John the Baptist, in whom the station of fear of Allah had appeared and manifested more than the other prophets (‘a), that he used to cry so much that his eyes and face used to get injured, to the extent that his mother used to bandage the sores on his face so as to reduce the pain caused by flowing tears. When man hears these incidents, he gets amazed that why ought a Prophet of Allah (‘a) to fear so much!? If amongst us a person was in such a state and fears this much, if we do not say that he is mad, then at least we affirm that his state is not normal

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!and not natural

If we look at the verses of the Qur’an with the intention of taking lesson and admonition, we gather that fear of Allah has been introduced as a condition for .deriving benefit from the admonitions of the prophets (S) and attaining prosperity

إِنَّمَا تُنْذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ بِالْغَيْبِ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ

You can only warn him who follows the reminder and fears the Beneficent God in“ (secret; so announce to him forgiveness and an honorable reward.”(۱

In this ayat, Allah advises the Noble Prophet (S) to direct his calling and guidance at people who fear Allah in the hearts and whose natural dispositions have not yet been completely contaminated by sin, wrong doing and obscurities. This type of people benefits from the calling and directives of the prophets, not that person who has no fear and dread of Allah perpetrates sin audaciously and without any guilty feelings at all. Without the least doubt, his heart is dark and is harder than the rock and there is .no aperture in his inner soul for the penetration of light and brightness

:In another verse, Allah states

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَى * فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى

And as for him who fears to stand in the presence of his Lord and forbids the soul“ (from low desires, then surely the Garden—that is the abode.”(۲

Definitely fear is contrasted with hope and optimism, and Allah states, “And as for him who fears to stand in

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۱- Surat Ya Sin ۳۶:۱۱.

۲- Surat al-Nazi‘at ۷۹:۴۰-۴۱.

the presence of his Lord”, He does not state that “as for him who hopes to stand in the presence of his Lord”; this show that fear of Allah results in preventing the disobedience of the carnal soul and setting foot on the course of guidance and hope in the mercy of Allah has no effect in this regard.

In another verse, Allah states that after the high station and status of the people of faith and good works, paradise and its blessings are especially reserved for those who fear Allah:

جَزَاؤُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِى اللهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِىَ رَبَّهُ

“...Their reward with their Lord is gardens of perpetuity beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein forever; Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him, that is for him who fears his Lord.”(۱)

In another verse, fear, dread, humility, submissiveness and self-abasement in the presence of Allah has been mentioned as one of the most delicate qualities of the scholars of religion:

... إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ...

“...those of His servants who are possessed of knowledge fear Allah...”(۲)

In another instance, Allah warns the Muslims against fear of the oppressors and orders them to fear Him:

... فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِى وَلأُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِى عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

so do not fear them, and fear Me; that I may complete my favor on you and that..."
(you may walk on the right course."(۳)

:In another place, he states

إِنَّمَا ذَلِكُمْ

.Surat al-Bayyinah ۹۸: ۸ -۱
.Surat Fatir ۳۵:۲۸ -۲
.Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۱۵۰ -۳

الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَائَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُم مُؤْمِنِينَ

It is only the Satan that causes you to fear from his friends, but do not fear them, and"
(fear Me if you are believers."(۱)

The Status of the Fear of the Leaders and Saints [Awliya'] of Allah

A brief look at the invaluable role of fear of Allah and the praise that has been made in regard to it makes us comprehend why the saints [awliya'] of Allah used to preserve the highest level of this state in themselves, by studying the states of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Pure Imams ('a) we come across amazing states which if one or two hadiths had been narrated about them, there was room for man to doubt the existence of those states but they have not been narrated once or twice, on the contrary a lot of hadiths have been narrated in a successive way or with unbroken chains of transmission in regard to these states, to the extent that whenever we remember the personality of Imam 'Ali ('a), our minds are associated with his weeping and wailing and implorations and it is not possible at all to imagine Imam 'Ali ('a) without having an image of fear of Allah and also it is not possible at all to remember Imam al-Sajjad ('a) without the state of fear and dread of Allah. The Du'a' Abu Hamzah al-Thumali and the rest of his supplications are delicate cases in point and are indicative of the existence of his extraordinary fear of Allah which is unimaginable .for us

It

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.Surat Al 'Imran ۳:۱۷۵ -۱

has been narrated in a hadith that at the time of performing the ritual ablution, the state of Imam 'Ali used to undergo change and his entire being used to shake. Likewise, it has been narrated in regard to Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba ('a) that whenever he came close to the mosque, the color of his cheeks used to change and his body used to tremble at the time of saying the inaugural phrase of prayer Allah-u Akbar. Likewise, the rest of the Infallibles and Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a) were like this in .the presence of Allah

All this diligence in regard to keeping alive the quality of fear of Allah in the inner conscience and recommendation to it and manifestation and appearance of this state in the conduct of the leaders of religion is because of the invaluable role of fear of Allah in the formation, perfection and spiritual ascendance of man in his attainment of the course of direction and servitude. Without doubt, there are various effects and .benefits depending on the levels of fear

When we examine our psychological states, we gather that there is a certain limit of fear of Allah in us and we perceive its special benefits, but when we examine the states of people who have attained higher awareness and have gone a step further than us in knowledge of Allah and have attained perfection, we gather that their fear and dread of Allah was different in form and so were the effects and benefits

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.different

Of course, explaining the station of fear of Allah and its nature and effects is problematic and in order for this topic to become clearer, mentioning this point that when man perceives a great thing vis-à-vis himself, it gives him a state under whose

auspices he feels that he has lost his being and does not see his being any more. In other words, when man feels a greatness, he melts in it; like ice which melts under the rays of the sun. This melting and forgetting himself is an effect and special state which .appears as a result of perceiving the greatness of Allah

With regard to the previous discussions and issues about which books of ethics and mystics have been written, man attains perfection once he feels in himself utmost lowliness, self-abasement and humility in the face of Allah, the Exalted, and His endless majesty. The mystics have called this state the station of complete denial of the self or the station of annihilation; in this case man no longer perceives himself and once he sees himself no longer, he perceives Allah and His greatness. In technical .terms, he comprehends that besides attachment nothing else exists

Even if this talk is interesting and admirable but still the truth is that only a few people have ever attained this station and we have a long distance with that level. We ought not to think that our problem will be solved by learning a few terms; our problem will only

be solved by perceiving realities and under the auspices of servitude and obedience .(of Allah and following the way of the Infallible and Pure Ahl al-Bayt (‘a

We ought to try to take steps along their course and give room to rays of their attentions, fear and dread of theirs in our hearts, so that as a result of the capability and aptitude that we have we may draw nearer to Allah. Attention to those high stations and acknowledgement of their existence is beneficial to us, on the condition that we ought not to become proud and not imagine that we have attained those .stations

The Perfection of Man and the Feeling of Humility and Lowliness in Regard to Allah

Therefore, the perfection of man draws nearer when he melts in the face of Allah and does not see any autonomy for himself and perceives himself as dependent and in need of Allah; and the more man sees himself as dependent and low, the nearer he

draws to Allah. The way of attaining this perfection is that once he perceives the greatness of Allah, a feeling of lowliness and inferiority appears in him, for people who are seeking perfection, knowledge and the high levels of servitude, this is the best .way

For us fear is an undesirable state, but it is interesting that we ought to know that the saints [awliya'] of Allah derive pleasure from their fearful state and whenever they lose it once again try to recover it. This state is so desirable and pleasurable to them that they never want to be separated

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from it! We do not have the correct perception of that state and cannot explain it well because we have not attained it. But what we have gathered from the stories of the saints [awliya'] of Allah is that those who possessed intense love used to derive pleasure from suffering along the course of love. They derive pleasure from crying as .a result of absence from Him

Despite that the origin of crying is sadness and sorrow, but because it is for the Beloved, it is pleasure-giving to them. It is for this reason that we assert that fear of Allah is desirable and constructive for the saints [awliya'] of Allah and they are not displeased with melting in the presence of Allah and having a state of fear and awe; at least they know that this itself is a prerequisite to attaining eternal gratification .beyond which there is no other pleasure

For this reason the saints [awliya'] of Allah and the leaders of religion used to accord great importance to fear of Allah, because they believed that it was the best factor for annihilating the rebellion of the carnal soul and restraining them from the feelings of needlessness and autonomy and self-sufficiency and egotism. Likewise, this state is .[the best method of attaining the stage of annihilation in Allah [fana' fi Allah

In this regard, what ought to be made clear is that once some people learn terms such as 'the station of annihilation and absorption in Allah' [maqam-i mahw

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wa fana' fi Allah], they fantasize that they have become mystics and have attained high positions. It is good for this group to test themselves and see whether the feeling of fear of Allah exists in them or not; has there been a night in their lives when they did not sleep as a result of fear and awe of Allah? Have their eyes ever been swollen ?as a result of their crying as a result of fear of Allah

It is very easy for man to claim that they have attained annihilation in Allah and no longer need these states and stations but we ought to carefully examine as to whether a little bit of the state that had been attained by John the Baptist ('a) exists in ?us or not. Has any effect appeared in us as a result of these states

A person never becomes a mystic by making claims and learning a few mystical terms. This is a very long path filled with dangers; to quote that great man the deceased Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Amoli, may he reside in Allah's Garden of eternal bliss, traversing this course is harder than uprooting a mountain by means .[of eye lashes [as the tools

If a person wants to trudge the course of divine awareness, he has to make himself ready to endure a lot of hardships, ascetic self-discipline and keeping vigil at night; .[the path has to be trudged in the way that travelers have traversed it [before

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We ought to observe how the saints [awliya'] of Allah like Imam 'Ali ('a) and Imam al-.Sajjad ('a) traveled this path

Fear of Allah and Fleeing from Sin and Obsession with Popularity and Position

According to what has previously been discussed, one of the effects of fear of Allah for people who have attained high spiritual stations is annihilation or absorption in Allah but for ordinary people, the greatest produce of fear of Allah is abstinence from sin and forsaking wrong-doing. When man perpetrates sin, he aspires to bring to hand some benefit or attain some pleasure and gratification, whether that pleasure is

real or imaginary, whether that gratification is licentiousness or from the category of .acquiring titles and popularity and position

What can refrain man from such futile urges, which are a cause of sin and deviation, and free him from the trap of the Devil, is fear of Allah; attention to the fact that sin produces ominous effects and deprives him of the eternal and permanent blessings of the hereafter, makes him entangled in everlasting punishment (without the least (.doubt, the more the fear of Allah, the more its effects

It has been narrated in hadith that if there is fear of Allah in the heart of man, there will remain no room for love and obsession with power and position. That is to say a person who fears Allah is not obsessed with position, does not chase after being beloved by the people and having a good name and popularity. Ambition for position is the greatest calamity for man. It has been

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recorded in some hadiths that the greatest calamity for the believers is love of wealth and position. Obsession with status connotes seeking position and leadership. The thing which can remedy love of position, which is the last immodest quality to exit the :hearts of the truthful, is fear of Allah

Without the least doubt, the mania for fame, love of position and rank leaves the mind of a person who perceives the greatness of Allah and comprehends his own minuteness and smallness vis-à-vis Allah and knows what dangerous repercussions sin has for his world and hereafter. Therefore, the greatest effect of fear of Allah in us is flight from becoming tainted by sin. Of course, love of Allah has become stable in people whose knowledge has become complete and they yearn to reach the beatific .presence of Allah

It is this very love of Allah and yearning to attain the beatific presence of Allah that causes them to overlook [anything] other than the Beloved but this exclusively pertains to the worthy and we have not attained that position of love of Allah. The only thing which is attainable for us is strengthening fear of Allah in our hearts, so that as a

result of that we may remain invulnerable to sin and bit by bit attain the aptitude to love Allah in our hearts and arrive at high levels of love and divine knowledge.

The Role of Perceiving the Status of the Fear of the Lovers of Allah and the Angels

Now that talk concerning fear of Allah and its importance and benefits has been brought up, the issue

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arises as to what we ought to do in order to give rise to fear of Allah in us? One of the best ways to arrive at this level is to look at the degree of the fear of people who are beloved by Allah. Without the least doubt, attending to their [spiritual] states and their boundless fear of Allah is the best way to motivate us to attain fear of Allah. This is the same method which the Noble Prophet (S) has pursued in this hadith.

Among the most beloved slaves of Allah are the angels. The Gracious Qur'an, describing these worthy servants of Allah who are pure from any contamination states:

وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ خِيفَتِهِ...

"And the thunder declares His glory and praise, and the angels too for awe of Him..."(۱)

With regard to what has been mentioned that knowing the majesty of Allah and paying heed to it give rise to fear and dread of Allah, we find a fine example of this knowledge in the angels of Allah, as the Noble Prophet (S) has expressed in this report that a group of them who are in the divine presence of Allah perceive themselves as small and low and are humbly standing with lowered heads in fear and dread of Allah since the beginning of their creation to the Day of Resurrection. Perhaps, they lack the courage to raise their heads as a result of the intensity of fear of divine need and worry and anxiety and/or

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.Surat al-Ra'd ۱۳:۱۳ -۱

.as a result of attending to the infiniteness and majesty of Allah

When the angels of Allah who are pure from any contamination and sin are scared of divine need in this way, they drop their heads before His majesty and tremble and do not dare raise their heads as a result of feeling guilty of neglecting worship of Allah, is it not worthwhile that us who are stricken by sin and have been ensnared into the fetters of the carnal soul and the deadly trap of the Devil not to raise our heads as a ?result of excess shame and embarrassment

A finer example of the state which the angels have in regard to Allah is when we find ourselves confronted by a great person; we lose ourselves, our tongues do not have the ability to speak and involuntarily drop our heads. Once people who had experienced the greatness of Imam Khomeini's personality and knew him completely were in his presence, it used to seem as though the personality of Imam Khomeini used to melt them like ice as a result of the excess greatness and awe of Imam Khomeini. They used to find themselves facing a majestic mountain of knowledge and power and used to feel they are completely nothing. This is one of the stages of the .servants of Allah

Allah has angels who even the great angels hardly perceive their greatness. It has been narrated in a report that the Angel Gabriel revealed his true image only a few

times to the Noble Prophet (S). The Noble Prophet (S) stated that at the time of his appearance and manifestation, the Noble Prophet used to witness his light .encompassing the East and West

,Imam al-Baqir ('a) states

One day the Noble Prophet (S) was seated and the Angel Gabriel was next to him." Suddenly, Gabriel looked at the sky and the light from him reflected in the sky and its intensity was continually increasing until it attained the color of saffron. Then, Gabriel

drew himself close to the Noble Prophet (S) and the Noble Prophet looked at the sky. Then, he saw that the light of Gabriel had encompassed the West and East of the cosmos in entirety and was getting close to the earth."(1)

Of course, the rank of the Noble Prophet (S) and his luminousness is further than that of the Angel Gabriel, but the Noble Prophet (S) perceived such greatness of Gabriel because his reality manifested itself on the human nature of the Noble Prophet (S).

Lesson ۲۰: The Prophet's (S) Description of Heaven and Hell

point

There are various ways of attaining the station of fear of Allah, amongst which is contemplation on the spiritual states of the dreadful and fearful of Allah whom knowing can aid man at selecting them as the best role models in the course of attaining the state of fear and dread of the presence of Allah. For this reason, in this section of the hadith, the station of fear of the best of Allah's slaves, the angels, has been introduced and

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۶, p. ۲۹۲.

in the previous lesson we discussed about it.

Meditation about the Greatness of Creatures

The other way of attaining the station of fear is meditation about the greatness of creatures. Without doubt, comprehending the greatness, stability and firmness of creatures leads man to understand better the majesty and infinite wisdom of Allah and his own incapacity, inability and indigence [in the face of Allah] and in this case undertake more diligent endeavor in the direction of attaining perfection and completion and forsake obeying the appetitive soul. In addition to this, by knowing the majesty of Allah and his boundless authority and power, he becomes acutely afraid and apprehensive of disobeying Allah.

By examining in religious texts and hadiths and verses of the Gracious Qur'an the directives about knowledge of the greatness of creatures and awareness of the majesty of the Creator, we find that Allah and the saints [awliya'] of religion have taken a lot of effort to explain the greatness of the creatures of Allah. They have set forth with their clear explications the delicateness, stability, firmness and variety of creatures and in this way used to incite people to look around themselves and meditate about the creatures of Allah, ranging from very small creatures to the big .and great creatures

In his brilliant explanation, Imam 'Ali ('a) makes meditation and contemplation about the infinite power of Allah and the variety of His blessings known as a means of being :led to the correct path and to fear of Allah

Had they pondered over the greatness of His"

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power and the vastness of His bounty, they would have returned to the right path and feared the punishment of the Fire; but hearts are sick and eyes are impure. Do they not see the small things He has created, how He strengthened their system and opened for them hearing and sight and made for them bones and skins? Look at the ant with its small body and delicate form. It can hardly be seen in the corner of the eye, nor by the perception of the imagination; how it moves on the earth and leaps at its livelihood. It carries the grain to its hole and deposits it in its place of stay. It collects during the summer for its winter, and during strength for the period of its weakness. Its livelihood is guaranteed, and it is fed according to fitness. Allah, the Kind, does not forget it and Allah, the Giver, does not deprive it, even though it may be in dry stone (and fixed rocks."(۱

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) narrates a thorough hadith that Zaynab the perfume seller came to the Noble Prophet's (S) house and asked about the majesty of Allah, the Exalted. In response to her question, the Noble Prophet (S) embarked upon comparing the cosmoses and seven skies and the galaxies and also the minuteness and smallness of :every one of them with the other; one of his statements was

This earth and that which is inside it and that which is above it is in the“

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ٧٣۶, sermon [khutbah] ٢٢٧ -١

(face of the second sky like a finger-ring that has fallen [or been lost] in the desert.”(١)

This relationship also exists regarding every cosmos when compared with the cosmos above it until we arrive at the seventh sky, which too is nothing when compared to the .Divine Throne

In order to give rise to wonderful fruits from meditation about the expansiveness and greatness of the cosmos and to perceive the minuteness and smallness of man, the scholars of ethics and divine instructors have recommended that when you want to recite your prayers and attend to the divine Essence, go to an expansive desert with boundless vastness because it is in that case that you will better perceive your .minuteness in the presence of His majestic creation

It is natural that as a result of man being confined to a closed and confined environment, his imagination of the cosmos is limited to that same tight environment but once he goes to the expansive desert and witnesses the mountains and seas, he will have another conception of the world. It has to be borne in mind that this is just in regard to the expansiveness and greatness of the world, regardless of the !comparison of the earth with the sky and the first sky with the rest of the skies

Nowadays, information which has been attained from the galaxies and stars by means of telescopes and spaceships gives invaluable help to man in understanding the created world. It is natural that if before worship

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶٠, pp. ٨٣-٨۵, Iranian print -١

man thought a little about the greatness of creation, he would perceive his smallness

better and in this case get closer to Allah, because the way of getting close to Allah is .feeling small and minute in His presence

The Indescribable Greatness of the Resurrection

There is not the least doubt that the last world, among others heaven and hell, are among the greatest creations of Allah whose conception and perception are not feasible for us. On the basis of what is gathered from the verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths, in the same way that we are incapable of perceiving the greatness of Allah, we are incapable of perceiving the greatness of the Day of Resurrection and its awe and terror too and we cannot have any conception of it. But paying heed to and taking a look at the explanation of the Qur'an and hadiths in regard to the Day of Resurrection prepares us better to perceive our smallness and circumstances in the face of the greatness of the Resurrection and heaven and hell, which are signs of the .greatness of the Creator

:In regard to dread and terror that prevails over the Resurrection, the Qur'an states

يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارى وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارى وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللهِ شَدِيدٌ

On the day when you shall see it, every woman giving suck shall quit in confusion" what she suckled, and every pregnant woman shall lay down her burden, and you shall see men intoxicated, and

(they shall not be intoxicated but the chastisement of Allah will be severe."(۱

The Resurrection plain is so terrifying and horrifying that man becomes unconscious, such that he has no power to control himself. A mother, for whom her most beloved one is her child, even worse a suckling baby who has an intense material and .emotional need of her, forgets the baby as a result of fear and dread

Once man carefully attends to the concept and purport of the ayats of the Qur'an, he

will comprehend how daunting they are and impel man to review his opinion in regard to their perceptions and vain activities, a transformation will occur in man and will forsake that which is an encumbrance on the path to guidance and prosperity.

But it is regrettable that we seldom pay attention to the purport of these ayats and content ourselves only with recitation and outward form of ayats and refrain from contemplating about the meanings and perceiving their greatness. With regard to what has been mentioned, we are incapable of perceiving the essence and greatness of the hereafter and heaven and hell and our conception of the Resurrection, heaven and hell is similar to the imagination and feeling which arise in the world.

If it is narrated to us about the fire of the hell and its burning, our imagination of its burning is like the burning we feel when we put our hands on fire and nothing more. Or, when mention is made about

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۱- Surat al-Hajj ۲۲:۲.

the blessings and pleasures of heaven, our conception does not go further than what we have known and felt in the world.

The utmost limit of man's brain goes so far as to conceive things which it has seen or their prototypes which it has witnessed, even then after comparison, and it has no conception and imagination of things which it has not seen. It is as a result of these very limitations in the perception and comprehension and activities of the brain of man that there is no option for explaining the attributes and qualities of the last world save that they are explicated in forms which are similar to what man perceives in the world, otherwise he will never at all comprehend those qualities.

For this reason, it is possible for those qualities to have occurred a million times for them to reflect and reproduce themselves in the realms of our worldly comprehension and understanding and be effective, otherwise if it is beyond the realm of our perception, it will not be effective in us because it is not perceptible and

.comprehensible

In regard to what has been mentioned, effort has been made in the Qur'an and hadiths to explain the majesty of heaven and hell and the blessings and punishments in the form of examples which people are acquainted with. In this hadith too the Noble Prophet (S) has selected this same method in order to explain the greatness of .heaven and hell

Describing a Section of the Tortures of Hell

The Noble Prophet (S) explains a

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section of the punishments of hell to Abu Dharr stating that if an insignificant amount of it appears in the world, it will have very destructive and disastrous effects. He also mentions an example from heavenly blessings which are unbearable for earthly man. This elucidation is intended at guiding us lovers of the world and its treasures so that as a result of comparing the world with the hereafter, we may perceive the .minuteness and smallness of the world

Even if the last world with all its indescribable largeness and expansiveness is itself a specimen of the ayats (signs) of Allah and all have acquired existence with one existential resolution [of Allah] but are themselves evidence of the majesty and power .of the divine Essence

:The Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! If on that day man had works equal to the works of seventy prophets,“ ”.he would count his works as few as a result of that which he sees

We do not even have works equivalent to the works of one believer, what with having the acts of adoration and works of the Noble Prophet (S) and what with performing good works equivalent to the worship of seventy prophets (S). Even if, assuming impossibility, we had such aptitude and capacity as to perform works equivalent to

the works of seventy prophets (S), we would still not consider it equivalent to a minute particle on the Resurrection once we see the greatness and expansiveness of that .Day

is so frightening and terrifying that without the grace and favor of Allah even the works of seventy prophets ('a) will not be of any avail to us. For this reason, we always have to have hope in the grace and mercy of Allah and safeguard the outpour of His clemency by means of supplication and imploration and inward attention to His expansive mercy. We ought not to rely on our works, because they do not avail us .anything

:In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) states

And if a pail of the pus and filth of hell were poured on the eastern part of the earth," ".the brains of the people living on the western part of the earth would boil

In the Gracious Qur'an kinds of food for the dwellers of hell are mentioned, amongst :[which is refuse [ghislin

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هَهُنَا حَمِيمٌ * وَلاَ طَعَامٌ إِلاَّ مِنْ غِسْلِينٍ

(Therefore, he has not today a true friend, nor any food except refuse."(۱"

refuse [ghislin], which is the drink of the people of hell, denotes filthy water which remains after washing clothes and utensils. That water is very fetid and dirty as a result of sucking all the dirt and smell out of the washed items. In reality, refuse is dirt and contamination which is a result of the filthy and ugly works of man and is so smelly, fetid and chocking that if a pail of it were poured in the eastern part of the cosmos, the brains of those dwelling

۱- ۶۹:۳۵-۳۶ Surat al-Haqqah.

on the western part of the world would boil.

Our conception of the boiling of man's brain is limited to a very inflamed and burning fire brought close to the head of a human being until their brain boils and becomes exterminated but no matter how hot and burning that fire might be, it is not effective when placed at a distance of ten or more meters. But in the Resurrection, the dwellers of the eternal infernal hell become so thirsty that they become compelled to drink boiling and hot water one pail of which if poured on the eastern part of the earth would boil and wipe out the brains of those dwelling on the western part of it.

The fire of hell and the punishment of the grave and the Resurrection are not comparable to the fire of earth and its punishment. The fire of the world is cold and docile and only burns the surface and is easier to endure than the fire of the eternal inferno but the fire of hell is pure and even conscious. It is for this reason that no fire in the world burns the soul but the fire of hell burns and melts the heart and soul too in addition to the body. There is no doubt that the fire of hell and its punishment are a reflection and consequence of man's works in the world.

The Reaction of People and Angels in Face of the Clamor and Roar of Hell

In continuation, the Noble Prophet (S) explains the intensity of the roaring and clamor of hell

stating:

"And when the hell roars, no angel and messenger remains standing save that they fall on their knees and say, 'O Lord! Give us redemption!' Even Abraham forgets his son Isaac and says, 'I am Your friend Abraham. Forget me not.'"

Allah in the Qur'an states:

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُوا فَفِى النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ

So as to those who are unhappy, they shall be in the fire; for them shall be sighing"
(and groaning in it."(١)

:Interpreting this ayat, 'Allamah Tabataba'i states

In the commentary of the Qur'an by Zamakhshari entitled, "Kishaf", 'zafir' denotes"
air and breathing out and 'shahiq' implies breathing in the air. Allah's purport is that the dwellers of hell take air in their chests and then release it and because of the hotness of the fire and the greatness and magnitude of the punishment, raise their
(voices in lamentation and wailing and mourning."(٢)

According to the aforementioned commentary, in the same way that man breathes in and out, hell too breathes in and out. By breathing out, the hell takes out the flames and burning heat which embraces all the dwellers of the inferno and by breathing in pulls the dwellers of hell back inside. The Noble Prophet (S) states, "Once hell roars, all the people, even the great prophets of Allah ('a) and the angels residing in His proximity become fearful and scared and fall on the ground, forget all the people and .things and only think about themselves

They neither have the ability to move nor the tranquility

.Surat Hud ١١:١٠۶ -١
.Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ١١, p. ٢١ -٢

to remain calm, that is why they fall on their knees in humility and lowliness and raise their hands asking for the infinite mercy of Allah and ask Him to grant them redemption; such that Abraham ('a) forgets his most beloved son Isaac and says, "O Lord! I am Your friend Abraham. Forget me not and grant me redemption from this great and deadly event." This is an example of the requital of Allah on the Day of Resurrection which would drive all creatures into fright if it were to appear in the .world

In order to gather more awareness of hell and its tortures, it is worthwhile to quote a :(thorough hadith from Imam al-Sadiq ('a

One day when the Prophet (S) was seated, the Angel Gabriel came close to him in a" sad and sorrowful state as a result of which his color had transformed. The Prophet (S) stated, 'Why are you sad and sorrowful?' Gabriel replied, 'O Muhammad! Why ought I not to be thus when the breaths of hell have been released today?' The '?Prophet (S) stated, 'What are the breaths of hell

He replied, 'Verily Allah, the Exalted, created the fire, then let it burn for a thousand years until it became red. Then, He ordered it to go down for a thousand years until it became white. Then after that too He ordered it to burn for a thousand years until the fire became black and that is the black and dark fire. Therefore, if

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one hook of the chain of the burning fire whose height is many inches high were let ".'loose on the world, the world would melt as a result of its fire

After that the Noble Prophet (S) cried and the Angel Gabriel also cried. Allah sent an angel to the two of them and that angel said, "Allah sends His peace upon you and ".states that He protected you from committing sins for which you would be punished

Heaven Is the Eternal Abode of the Believers and Righteous

Without the least doubt, heaven and its blessings are among the greatest creations of Allah and is allotted to people who traverse the path of servitude and obedience to Allah and by means of faith and good works have attained the highest human levels and in the end have got the capacity of ascending the spiritual realms [or celestial :[world

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَملُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجرِى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ... وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُون

And convey good news to those who believe and do good deeds, that they shall have" gardens in which rivers flow...and they shall have pure mates in them, and in them,

(they shall abide."(1)

:In another verse, Allah states

وَعَدَ اللهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِى جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِن اللهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah has promised to the believing men and believing women gardens, beneath" which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in gardens of perpetual abode; and best of all is Allah's

p: ۲۹۱

۱- Surat al-Baqarah ۲:۲۵.

(goodly pleasure—that is the grand achievement."(1)

The truth is that man prepares his heaven and its blessings by means of his righteous deeds and good works. For this reason, the more he endeavors at servitude and obedience of the Lord, and overcomes the hurdles by means of ascetic self-discipline and fighting with the carnal soul, the more he attains abundant and higher blessings; this is a reality we clearly infer from the hadiths and verses of the Gracious Qur'an. It :has been narrated from Imam al-Sadiq ('a) that the Prophet (S) stated

When I was taken around the sky, we entered heaven and there I saw the angels" busy building a palace and were placing bricks of gold and silver one over the other and sometimes used to put their work to a stop. I asked them, 'Why are you working intermittently?' They replied, 'We are waiting for materials and stuffs to be provided to us.' I asked, 'What are your materials?' They said, 'The invocations 'subhanallah [glory be to Allah]', and 'al-hamdu lillah [praise be to Allah]', and 'la ilaha illa Allah [there is no god but Allah]' and 'Allah-u Akbar [Allah is Great]' which is pronounced from the lips of the believer; once he gets pre-occupied with these invocations we too get busy with building and whenever he stops reciting these invocations, we stop our (work as well'."(2)

:The Noble Prophet (S) introduces and elucidates about heaven thus

O Abu Dharr! If one of the women of paradise were to appear“

۱- ۹:۷۲ (Surat al-Tawbah (or Bara'ah.

۲- ۱۲۳ .Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۸, p.

on a dark and unlit night, she would enlighten the world more than does the moon of the fourteenth night [of the lunar month] and the perfume which will arise from scattering her hair will reach the noses of every creature of the earth and if one of the clothes of the dwellers of the Garden of eternal bliss were spread in the world today, every person who would see that would become unconscious and the eyes of men ”.would not have the ability to see its radiance

It can be gathered from the words of the Noble Prophet (S) that man's organs and eyes are in the Resurrection stronger than organs and eyes in the world: people in the world are so weak and their perception and comprehension and endurance is so minute that if one of the clothes of paradise were to appear in the world, no eye would have the capacity to see and perceive it and every person who sees it would lose his senses and become unconscious; in spite of the fact that wearing and looking .at that dress is a normal thing

The truth is that in heaven aptitudes, amongst them the ability to see and perceive, are very high. The consciousness and perception of existents having the aptitude to perceive and comprehend, such as man, will be increased to more than a million times in the hereafter. In the last world, all things have life and in reality true life exists there and under its

auspices everything has an intellect and a conscience and the ability to speak; it is for :this reason that even the trees and stones speak

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَوةُ الدُّنْيا إِلاَّ لَهْوٌ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الآخِرَة لَهِىَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

And the life of this world is nothing but a sport and a play; and as for the next Abode;" (that most surely is the life—did they but know."(1)

It is natural that when everything has life, and even the herbs and stones speak as well, without the least doubt people will also have life and existence and all the organs of their bodies will be able to speak. It is for this reason that when in hell the ears, eyes and skin of the bodies of the dwellers of hell will give evidence about their crimes and sins, they will say, "How did you provide evidence about our works." Those organs :will reply thus

... أَنْطَقَنَا اللهُ الَّذِى أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ...

(Allah who makes everything speak has made us speak..."(2)..."

That which has been mentioned in this section in regard to the tortures of hell and the blessings of heaven cannot be measured by standards of this world. What is the nature of substances such as the refuse of hell which are so fetid and dangerous and choking that if a pail of it were poured on the eastern part of the cosmos would boil ?!the brains of those living on the western part of it

Of course, in order for

۱- Surat al-'Ankabut ۲۹:۶۴.

۲- Surat Ha Mim (or Fussilat) ۴۱:۲۱.

us not to imagine that such a thing is not feasible and is far from conception, Allah has placed and compressed energies in some substances such as atomic energy in uranium which if a small amount of their energy were released, it is so explosive and .destructive that it would wipe out and turn upside down the whole city

This is just the energy of elements and materials existent in this world. Now that

world whose power and energy is probably a million times more than the power and energy of this world leaves behind very great effects which are not perceptible to us.

That which has been mentioned is intended to make us comprehend our place of abode and circumstances; we ought to know that we have not been created for this limited world, in which we enjoy limited perception and conception. Our perception and conscience are limited in a world whose pleasures are limited too.

We ought to know that whatever is in the world is a pre-requisite for the hereafter and has a partial phenomenon of that thing which exists in the hereafter. Gratifications which we perceive in the world are not comparable to the pleasures of the Last Abode. Calamities and afflictions with which we are confronted are nothing compared to the tortures of the next world.

Without the least doubt, comparing the tortures of this world with those of the Last Abode and also comparing the blessings and pleasures of the world with the gratifications of the

p: ۲۹۵

Eternal Abode and explaining the differences and great disparities between them results in man, to the extent of his capacity and the ability of his brain, to perceive his minuteness and smallness and the world in which he lives in contrast to the Last World and also comprehend the minuteness of the created order vis-à-vis the Creator.

The other fruit of this comparison and analogy is forsaking pride and egotism and humility and submissiveness vis-à-vis right. If he derives benefit from the world, he ought not to take pride in himself and if he is deprived of a blessing, he should not wish for it because all the blessings of the world are not worth the value of one apple of paradise.

For this reason, this world is not a place of falling in love. We ought, by the grace of the directives of the prophets ('a) and the saints [awliya'] of Allah, to perceive the

greatness of the Resurrection and its Creator and by knowing our circumstances .endeavor not to be entangled in pride, egotism, self-admiration and bigheadedness

Lesson ۲۱: The Importance of Meditation and the Need for Preserving Factors which Ward off Negligence

point

Previous to this, discourse was had in regard to fear and dread and factors which make them appear in men. It has been said that amongst the factors which cause fear of Allah to appear in man is paying heed to the greatness of the Resurrection, the intensity of the tortures of hell and the value and expansiveness of the eternal .Garden of bliss

The relation of this section of

p: ۲۹۶

the words of the Prophet (S) with the previous issues is for the reason that qualities of the soul and the inner conscience like fear, dread, yearning, hope, love and affection all come into appearance once man is heedful and his heart is awake and aware; but if he were heedless, and his attention were weak, the states either never at all come .into appearance and/or appear in a weak and faint form

Once man becomes afflicted by negligence and hardheartedness and he himself gets aware of this ethical vice, there are causes and factors which help man to emerge from that low condition. Some of the causes and factors are from the inner .conscience of man and some of those factors are external

Sometimes, in the external world an event occurs, words are heard and/or conditions are provided which result in man's admonition, wakefulness and emerging from heedlessness. Of course, this effect is in the category of divine graces and man ought to make the most of these opportunities and to be thankful, so that the graces and favors of Allah, the Exalted, may multiply. If these opportunities are not appreciated and not made use of, the negligence and hardheartedness of man increases. In this

:regard, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Soften your voice [when you are] near corpses or at war with the“ ”.enemies of religion and at the time of reciting the Qur’an

In this section, the Noble Prophet (S) hints at three ethical, instructional and security

:advices

(The Three Recommendations of the Prophet (S

A) Speaking Softly At The Time Of Escorting A Funeral

It is very proper for man to speak softly and not loudly; this is a praiseworthy habit :which Luqman, the Wise, recommended to his son

... وَاغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِکَ إِنَّ أَنْکَرَ الأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ

And pursue the right course in your going about and lower your voice; surely the ...“ (most hateful of voices is braying of the asses.”(۱

Even if in ordinary instances speaking softly is desirable, but still in some cases we ought to speak softer than the common and ordinary instances and/or adopt quietness; for instance when man wants to concentrate his thoughts and attention on an event which has taken place and stop themselves from other deeds. It is natural that one of the instances which ought to drive man into thought and reflection and from which he ought to take lesson is at the time of escorting and burying a corpse. .Man has to attend to this fact that this death will one day come to him

For this reason, he ought to abstain from talking about worldly affairs and his attention should be concentrated on his final destination; he ought to ponder deeper into this fact that his corpse will be carried on the shoulders of people someday and take lesson from it. It is a pity that we do not pay heed to this issue and even at the time of escorting and burying corpses too we do not follow the proper rules of

conduct and do not seek to take lesson. We do this

p: ۲۹۸

.Surat Luqman ۳۱:۱۹ -۱

in spite of the fact that it has been recommended that at the time of escorting a corpse we ought to move in silence, tranquility, soberness and calm and our attention ought to only be directed at the corpse, that is why the Noble Prophet states:

"O Abu Dharr! When you are escorting a dead body, busy your intellect with meditation and humility, know that you too will go back to Him."

One of the issues which are likely to drive negligence out of man is witnessing the corpse of a believer which has left the world after a lifetime of endeavor and deriving benefit from the favors of the world and pleasure-seeking and his dead body is being taken to the grave. Without the least doubt, witnessing that sad scene drives man out of heedlessness because paying heed to the world and its treasures and encumbrances gives rise to negligence and the thing which concentrates man's attention to the hereafter causes wakefulness and abstinence from negligence.

For this reason, the best cause of wakefulness and keeping heedlessness at bay is for man to look at objective entities; after a lifetime of struggle an individual's life comes to an end, and he gets led to the last world. Even if man knows that death is certain and everyone dies, still witnessing a person who has passed away has more effects than merely knowing.

Opportunities like being present at the burial of believers ought to be made the most of in the

p: ۲۹۹

direction of edification of the soul and getting rid of the carnal desires of the soul and abstaining from distracting our attention while only concentrating on one's end. Man ought to conceive that this is a way we all are destined to trudge, sooner or later.

Therefore, is the transitory life of this world worth striving for without any anxiety? .We ought to think whether we have endeavored for the hereafter or not

Meditation and reflection about death, as has been emphasized in the hadiths and Qur'an, is one of the most effective factors which cause abstaining from the Devil and setting foot on the right path. Man ought to think that perhaps he may not remain alive an hour more because no man is certain about up to when he is going to remain .alive

Therefore, in contrast to long and protracted hopes which cause hardheartedness and heedlessness, paying attention to death results in abstaining from negligence and in man's awakening and all too often meditation and thought transform man's way of .life and his destiny too

It is natural that once man reflects about his destiny and perceives himself subdued in the face of the majesty of Allah, a state of brokenness, lowliness and humility appears in his heart whose effects also get manifested outwardly in the same way that once a believer stands to recite his prayers perceives himself in the presence of the greatness of Allah giving rise to humility and lowliness in him and of course

p: ٣٠٠

this is something which has been emphasized and has been mentioned as the most :delicate quality which causes a believer to attain his prosperity

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ * الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِى صَلاَتِهِمْ خَاشِعُون

"Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers..."(١)

In contrast, people who do not perceive the majesty of Allah and do not reflect upon) .the contents of prayer do not have humility and submissiveness(

As we have already said humility takes place in the heart and its effects become manifested in the organs and members of the body such as eyes, but at times humility :is attributed to certain parts of the body, as the Gracious Qur'an states

... وَخَشَعَتِ الأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلاَ تَسْمَعُ إِلاَّ هَمْسًا

and the voices shall be low before the Beneficent God so that you shall hear ought...“ (but a soft sound.”(۲

:Elsewhere, He states

خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ وَقَدْ كَانُوا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ وَهُمْ سَالِمُونَ

Their looks cast down, abasement shall overtake them; and they were called upon to“ (make obeisance; but they shall not be able.”(۳

According to what has been mentioned, being present at funerals and paying heed to the destiny of one who has passed away and also attention to the scene of the Resurrection and describing its conditions, to the extent that man is aware, causes humility, submissiveness and abstinence from negligence. But if man is at that moment indifferent, as if nothing has taken place, and only thinks about the world and talking to this person and that other

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۱- Surat al-Mu'minun ۲۳:۱-۲.
۲- Surat Ta Ha ۲۰:۱۰۸.
۳- Surat al-Qalam ۶۸:۴۳.

.person, transformation does not occur in him

Once someone dies, some people get busy with thinking about the benefit and gain which they derive from his death; if he was a teacher, they pre-occupy themselves with taking his position, if he was a boss, they become happy at the prospect of occupying his position. Once a doctor passes away, others are happy that they will .take his place

This is very regrettable and shameful. An event which is supposed to increase man's attention to the hereafter and the destiny of life becomes a cause for man to get

more submerged in the world. It is regrettable that in circumstances where lesson has to be taken and events which ought to be factors for man to become awake and to distance himself from illusions and fantasies, some people are afflicted by negligence and hardness of heart, become more entangled in delusions and fallacies and that frightening and awakening scene not only does not awaken them, but also increases the hardness of their hearts. It is for this reason that the Noble Prophet (S) advises Abu Dharr that one of the instances which causes fear, humility, lowliness and submissiveness in man is presence at funerals and burying rites; on the condition that one is attentive and heedful and abstains from being noisome and paying attention to this and that person. He only ought to think about himself and speak softly so as to follow up on his meditation and reflection; for the

p: ٣٠٢

reason that speaking loudly and even merely speaking occupy the heart of man and prevent him from presence of heart:

One day a man in Tehran asked the late 'Allamah Tabataba'i, may he reside in Allah's eternal Garden of bliss, "What ought I to do in order to have presence of heart during prayer?" In response, 'Allamah Tabataba'i said, "Speak less [during the course of your day]." We may perhaps be surprised about the role speaking has in preventing man from having presence of heart during prayer (coincidentally, that man was very talkative).

Without the least doubt, speaking and talking expend the energy [which is supposed to be preserved] for the mind, the soul and spirit of man, especially if talking is a custom, like admonishing, delivering speeches and teaching. When a group of people are listening to the words of a speaker, he takes care not to make a single mistake; it is for this reason that he concentrates all his attention on his talking and refrains from attending to himself. For this reason, speaking less and also speaking softly results in man becoming more attentive to his inner self and keeping mental distraction at bay.

In regard to the Noble Prophet's (S) state at the time of escorting or burying a corpse, a hadith has been recorded stating:

At the time of escorting and burying a corpse, intense sorrow used to overcome him“ (and he used to attend more to himself and speak less.”(١)

B) Speaking Softly At The Time Of War

Considering the circumstances of the forces and

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٨, p. ٢۶۴, Beirut print -١

the privacy of military secrets during military operations and war, the Noble Prophet (S) recommends speaking softly during war. During war special conditions arise—especially during planning for military operations and gathering information about the war zone—which call for utmost precaution and care at keeping war secrets and not .divulging the conditions of your forces to the enemies

All too often, speaking and improper movements result in the enemy becoming aware of the strategy of your operations and in the end the lives of people and soldiers fall in .danger and the design and strategy to become thwarted and frustrated

This truth was very much felt by our soldiers during the entire eight years of war; at times circumstances were so sensitive and dangerous and their conduct was so fateful that they had to use ways where their footsteps had not to be heard; in truth, .they used to make use of the principle of attacking while the enemy is unaware

Another point which can be derived from this advice of the Noble Prophet (S) is that the sensitivity and importance of war and military operations demand that the forces use all their capacity and energy in the direction of advancing military goals. In view of this, with silence and tranquility and concentration of the senses, they ought to concentrate all their capacity and energy concealed in their inner selves and with perfect firmness, decisiveness and steadfastness combat their enemies and abstain from that which dissuades them from war and military

operations. Bearing this important matter in mind, in his military recommendations to :his son Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah during the war of Jamal, Imam 'Ali ('a) states

Mountains may move from their position but you should not move from yours. Grit" your teeth. Lend to Allah your head (in fighting for Allah, give yourself to Allah). Establish your feet firmly on the ground. Have your eye on the remotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And keep sure that succor is but from Allah, (the Glorified."(١)

C) Speaking Softly At The Time Of Reciting The Qur'an

If man finds the grace to be present in sessions of recitation of the Gracious Qur'an, whether his aim and motivation is to derive benefit from the Noble Qur'an or reasons other than that, like participating in sessions of wishing Allah's mercy for the dead and to expresses condolences to the remaining people, it is necessary to make the most of this invaluable chance, embark upon meditation about the ayats (signs) of Allah and .paying heed to their meanings and purports

Even when the celestial sound of the Gracious Qur'an is being aired on radio, we ought to delve into deep thought and meditation so as to derive benefit from the meanings of this eternal, inspiring and guiding miracle in the direction of edifying and purifying the inner soul and getting rid of inward ethical vices and establishing :invaluable attributes like humility and lowliness, as the Qur'an states

اللهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِی تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِینَ یَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِینُ جُلُودُهُمْ

.Nahj al-Balaghah, p. ۶٢, short saying ١١, trans. Fayd al-Islam -١

وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللهِ...

Allah has revealed the best announcement, a book conformable in its various parts," repeating whereat do shudder the skins of those who fear their Lord, then their skins (and their hearts become pliant to the remembrance of Allah..."(١)

With regard to the wonderful effects of the Qur'an, if man does not pay attention to the purports of the verses at the time of recitation of the Gracious Qur'an and for him there is no difference between the sound of the Qur'an and the words of others, he .gets afflicted by negligence and his hardheartedness increases

Considering the importance and gravity of the need to protect the honor of the :Gracious Qur'an and to grant it value, Allah states

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

And when the Qur'an is recited, then listen to it and remain silent, that mercy may be" (shown to you."(٢

It is natural that in regard of the fact that Allah has placed the Qur'an as a means for man's guidance and his inner transformation and conversion and concentrating his attention on Allah, now if he does not pay attention to the sound of the Qur'an and not differentiate between that heavenly sound from the rest of the sounds and not embark upon deriving benefit from the divine admonitions and advices, he has done an ugly deed and has behaved with ingratitude. For this reason, in addition to this fact that he has lost an invaluable opportunity, his hardheartedness has also been

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١- Surat al-Zumar ٣٩:٢٣.
٢- Surat al-A'raf ٧:٢٠۴.

.increased and loses that relative and limited readiness which he had for guidance

In order to derive benefit from the Gracious Qur'an, it is necessary to concentrate our attention and listen to it as if the heavenly sounds of the Gracious Qur'an are being pronounced by the two lips of the Noble Prophet (S). In this case, the Qur'an produces .fruit in us and we derive benefit from it in a praiseworthy way

In sessions of reciting the Gracious Qur'an, like the mourning sessions during which the Qur'an is recited, listening to it and paying heed to it is a praiseworthy habit and a

lot of recommendation has been made in regard to it. Unfortunately, we do not observe this good habit. We engage in conversation with one another during recitation of the Gracious Qur’an at mourning ceremonies and often times we talk loudly and without the least doubt a person whose thoughts and mind have been drawn to conversation and listening to the words of those around him lags behind at .paying attention to the gracious Quran

In this regard, the Sunnis have excelled more than us; they have set up special sessions for recitation of the Qur’an and pay praiseworthy attention to the sound and recitation of the Gracious Qur’an, but on the other hand some of them participate in those sessions in order to watch the skills which are being displayed by the reciters of the Qur’an and to encourage and cheer them by repeatedly saying ‘Allah Allah’. Far

from comparison, these sessions are like concerts where a singer sings and the rest .of the people clap hands for him

In reality, such people are paying attention to the words and sounds of the Gracious Qur’an and not to its purports and wonderful effects and taking lesson from it. Unfortunately, we seldom hold sessions of recitation and listening to the Gracious Qur’an. The general sessions of our recitation of the Qur’an are just those same sessions of recitation for the dead at mourning ceremonies. In these sessions the reciter recites the Qur’an, but the other people are busy with their own work and/or !talk to one another

Sometimes, they raise the voice of the loud speaker so high that it bothers the ears of every listener and for this reason divest them of the interest to listen to the Qur’an. This is in spite of the fact that all the aspects have to be observed and the sound of the loud speakers have to be adjusted to the extent that those present in the session derive benefit and it ought not to be the cause of their getting bothered and leaving .the recitation session

It has to be added that both these two methods and customs are incorrect and

insufficient; both the method which we have adopted of not paying attention to and rarely holding recitation sessions is not right and both the method which the Sunnis have opted for merely holding recitation sessions for the sake of displaying

their artistic capacities and not paying heed to the meanings and purports of the .verses of the Qur'an is insufficient

It is proper to hold general and expansive sessions for recitation of the Qur'an where the sound and recital is beautiful and also makes available the opportunity and occasion to explain the meanings and purports of the Qur'an and to take lesson from it. Verses of the Gracious Qur'an ought to be recited with a beautiful and sorrowful sound which gives rise to humility and submissiveness in the listeners and also causes :admonition and wakefulness and self-awareness in them

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلى الرَّسُولِ تَرَى أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِن الدَّمْعِ...

And when they hear what has been revealed to the Apostle, you will see their eyes" (overflowing with tears..."(۱)

The Consequences of Inattention to the Causes of Spiritual Wakefulness

O Abu Dharr! Know that salt is the preserver [or medicine] of everything corruptible," ".but once salt itself becomes corrupt, there is no treatment [or preserver] for it

Perhaps, the connection between this sentence and the previous issues is that all our problems arise from negligence, hedonism and obsession with material things and they give rise to the corruption of the heart and soul. Now, there are means and ways of treating these pains and encumbrances which give rise to vigilance and man's paying heed to his destiny. One of those causes is presence in mourning ceremonies .and burying rites and paying attention to death

When man sees the corpse of a person who is heading to the last world being carried

.Surat al-Ma'idah ۵:۸۳ -۱

on people's shoulders, he visualizes his own death and delves deep into thought. This transformation of the inside results in shame and humility, a state of humility and lowliness vis-à-vis right is brought to life in him. At that time, he becomes afraid of the .destiny which lies in expectation of him

In regard to taking lesson from the death of other people, Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states to :one of his companions by the name of Aba Salih

When you are carrying a corpse on your shoulders, imagine that you are being" carried on other people's hands and you are requesting your Lord to return you to the world once again and He too grants your request and you are returned to the world. Then, take care and observe how you begin your second life once more." Thereafter, he stated, "It is surprising that some people who are deprived of seeing either the previous and later generations and amongst whom the call of departure and (emigration is continually made are likewise pre-occupied by amusement and play."(۱

In consideration to what has been mentioned, once a factor like salt, which prevents the corruption of the heart and is medicine for spiritual pains, becomes corrupt, what ?thing would remedy it

Being present at mourning and burying rites ought to plunge man deep into thought and remind him about his own death, if it becomes a cause of more reflection about the world and his future and/or at the time of movement not only

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.Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۳, p. ۲۵۸ -۱

does he not take lesson, but with utmost lack of shame engages in gossiping and back-biting other people; he becomes corrupt like corrupt salt and after that man becomes afflicted by hardheartedness and coldness and awakening scenes do not bring about any transformation in him and no medicine can cure his inner pains. There

is no doubt that recitation of the Gracious Qur'an is a remedy of man's inner spiritual :pains, as states the Gracious Qur'an

يا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَشَفاءٌ لِما فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدىً وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

O men! There has come to you an admonition and a healing for what is in the breasts" (and guidance and a mercy for the believers."(١

Now once the Gracious Qur'an, which is a cure and paying attention to its meanings places invaluable truths at the disposal of man, becomes a means for the world and acquisition of fame, not only is it not a cure but itself adds to our spiritual pains and becomes a cause of more obsession with the world and becoming distanced from .Allah and the truth of the Gracious Qur'an

Reproaching Laziness and Vain Laughing

:Reproaching futile laughter and laziness, the Noble Prophet states

Know that there are two unacceptable traits among you: one is laughter out of" surprise and wonder (laughter that has no cause) and the other is (deliberate) laziness ".and idleness which is not a result of forgetfulness and ignorance

The Noble Prophet (S) admonishes the believers that there are two unacceptable qualities in them which cause more negligence and

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.Surat Yunus ١٠:٥٧ -١

the weakening of the state of fear and dread. It is proper for the believers to undertake curing and remedying these two indecent attributes, one of which is inopportune laughter. At times, man is encountered by surprising and laughable scenes in which case he naturally becomes overcome by laughter, despite that people whose attention is fixed on Allah only smile when they witness a laughable scene and .do not raise their voices to a boisterous laugh

When a funny tale was narrated to some great men, or when they were encountered by a laughable incident, they only used to smile but their attention was elsewhere and .witnessing that incident did not leave the least effect in them

Even if the dignity of a believer and his attention to the ultra-cosmos and to the presence of Allah do not grant him the opportunity to laugh, if a comical moment occurs, there is no fault with laughing but we ought to keep aloof from loud and inappropriate laughter because intense heedlessness has overcome the heart of a .person who laughs inopportunely and loudly on a small pretext

:Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states in a hadith

Inopportune laughter is a result of ignorance," and thereafter His Holiness adds, "Do" not laugh to the extent where your teeth become visible regardless of your indecent actions. And a person who has performed ugly deeds is not free from nightly (afflictions."(١

In this hadith Imam al-Sadiq ('a) clearly states that the boisterous laughter of a person who as a result

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١- Usul al-Kafi, vol. ۴, p. ۴٨۶, Kitab al-'Asharah.

of ugly actions has a bleak future and a dangerous destiny, in such a way that it is likely for divine requital to befall him at any moment, is inappropriate; such laughter is admissible for a person who is certain about his future and is not worried about his destiny. This is in spite of the fact that we notice that even the Prophet (S) and saints [awliya'] of Allah did not have such surety and only put their trust in the mercy and .grace of Allah

:(Concerning the effects of excessive laughter on the heart, Imam al-Sadiq ('a

Excessive laughter kills the heart." Then, he also stated, "Inordinate laughter" (dissolves religion in the same way that water dissolves salt."(١

For this reason, we ought to keep aloof from inappropriate laughter which has no logical reason. Man ought not to lose his control over his mouth, tongue, eyes and ears. If he wants to laugh, he ought to see whether there is a reason for laughing and what the cause of laughter is, otherwise he ought not to laugh on every pretext .imaginable

It is necessary to mention that having a cheerful face and smiling at all times is desirable and valuable and one of the social manners of the believers is to smile in their gatherings and when they meet one another—no matter how full their hearts may be filled with sorrow, grief, fear and dread—so that their conduct may not be a cause of inconvenience and bother for others; as has been

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.Ibid -١

:recorded in a hadith

Believers have cheerful and smiling appearances and their sorrow is hidden in their" (hearts."(١

This cheerfulness and smiling is different from loud and boisterous laughter which is not befitting of a believer. A pious believer who is focused and has faith in the resurrection does not overlook his works and movements and does not act on the .basis of the carnal souls and appetitive soul

The second characteristic which the Noble Prophet (S) considers as indecent for the ummah (Islamic community) is laziness and indolence. Sometimes, man does not discharge a certain duty as a result of heedlessness, like forgetting to perform some worship; in this case he has not perpetrated sin. But sometimes he feels lazy to .discharge a known duty consciously; this quality is not worthy of a believer

It is not acceptable of believers to consciously evade responsibilities. It is not acceptable of a believer to feel lazy when prayer time is due and upon hearing the call

to prayer [adhan] and as a result be absent at the congregational prayers. This kind of disregard is not expected of a believer, whether this laziness is in regard to .discharging obligatory duties or recommended ones

One of the scholars of Yazd by the name of the deceased Haj Shaykh Ghulam Rida Yazdi was a very earnest man. One day he and I entered the mosque. When he saw a number of people sitting idly while waiting for the prayer leader [imam] and not performing the recommended optional

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۶۷, p. ۳۰۵ -۱

prayers, he got angry and said, "Allah's curse be on the Devil! Are you scared of being "!taken to paradise? Stand up and recite the recommended optional prayers

It is very proper that man engages in performing the recommended optional prayers once man enters the mosque before the congregational prayers and is not befitting of a believer to be heedless to this important issue. This matter is true in regard to the rest of the issues too; sometimes man lags behind in his studies as a result of illness, but sometimes laziness and seeking comfort prevent him from study and research. Basically, laziness and pleasure-seeking are great adversities which stand in the way of man's growth and advancement and it is proper that we get rid of them in .ourselves

The Role of Meditation in Worship

:In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! Two rak'ats (cycles) of conscious and heedful prayer accompanied by " ".meditation is better than one night of worship with a heedless heart

Taking into account the importance and prominent role of meditation and reflection, the Noble Prophet (S) states that two rak'ats (cycles) of prayer performed in a conscious and heedful manner—not that they ought to be necessarily long—but along

with thought have more reward and effects in the perfection of man than waking up at night and spending it all in prayer until morning without the presence of heart. Of course, if man recites his prayers very fast and with a lot of haste, he cannot perceive his duties

and pray in the correct way; as can be inferred from the hadiths, prayer with haste which is devoid of reflection, thought and heed is like a crow with its beak in the ground; that is to say, this prayer is not profitable and because it occurs without attention and is performed so fast that man does not find the opportunity to perceive the presence of Allah, and to reflect and meditate upon the context and purports of prayer. What is being asserted is that two rak'ats of prayer with consciousness and attention are better than long and repeated prayers without heed and presence of .heart

As has repeatedly been said, man's spiritual journeying consists of both academic and spiritual journeying; man's spiritual ascendancy depends on his intellect and the increase of his perception. In other words, man sets foot on the course of ascendancy towards Allah accompanied by knowledge. His gaining proximity to Allah does not imply changing places; there is no need for man to move from one place to another, but his becoming proximate to Allah is dependent on the increase of his intelligence and attentiveness, the rise and growth of his conception of the majesty of Allah and His Attributes; the more his awareness increases, the more he becomes close to .Allah

This kind of spiritual journey is called scientific [or academic] journeying towards Allah which is attained under the auspices of more knowledge and its first stage is awareness of the self which gives rise to

knowledge of Allah. In contrast, man lags behind in perfection and growth to the same .extent that he is ignorant

Prayer is a means of attaining perfection and is meant to make man feel more nearness to Allah. But if this prayer is devoid of attention and perception of the status of Allah, the person reciting the prayers is like a person busy performing exercise and stretches, because he has not derived any benefit from the context and purport of .prayer

Of course, prayer devoid of attention and presence of heart is better than sleeping all night long and not praying, or Allah forbid, being pre-occupied with perpetrating sin and evil doing. The very act of keeping vigil at night with the intention of prayer, even if that prayer does not procure complete reward because of being performed without the presence of heart, is a praiseworthy act but it is proper that prayer is accompanied by attentiveness and presence of the heart; in which case his movements become faster and he arrives at the destination faster, which is proximity .[qurb] to Allah

Lesson ۲۲: The Realm of Right and Falsehood

point

O Abu Dharr! Right is heavy and bitter while falsehood is light and sweet. All too often,“ ”.an hour’s licentiousness results in protracted sorrow and grief

Right and Falsehood and the Instances of Their Application

One of the general axioms which is discussed in Islamic culture and has wide applications is the concept of ‘Right and Falsehood [haqq wa batil]’. In the Gracious Qur’an, right and falsehood have been employed in regard to objects of worship; in

p: ۳۱۷

the case that Allah, the Exalted, is asserted as the right object of worship and the rest :of the objects of worship are known as false

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ...

That is because Allah is the Truth, and that which they call upon besides Him; that is“

(the falsehood…"(١)

Sometimes, right and falsehood are treated in the field of beliefs, opinions and notions and at times they are discussed in the scope of actions and deeds. One of the issues which the Gracious Qur'an teaches us is that the world is intertwined with right and falsehood. It can be asserted that the formation of this cosmos is combined of two .elements; right and falsehood

Allah is the foundation of right and falsehood which is a parasitical matter that manifests itself under the auspices of right. On the basis of the teachings of the Qur'an, this mixture of right and falsehood is not eternal, a day will come when right will be completely separated from falsehood and will remain stable and falsehood will :be exterminated

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ...

Nay! We cast the truth against the falsehood, so that it breaks its head, and lo! It" (vanishes…"(٢)

:Elsewhere, Allah likens falsehood to foam

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلُهُ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَذَلِكَ

p: ٣١٨

١- Surat al-Hajj ٢٢:٦٢.
٢- Surat al-Anbiya' ٢١:١٨.

يَضْرِبُ اللهُ الْأَمْثَالَ

He sends down water from the cloud, then watercourses flow (with water) according" to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam, and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of making ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it; thus does Allah compare the truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes

away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it tarries in the earth; thus does Allah set forth parables."(۱)

There is a delicate point, which becomes apparent once we pay heed to the reality of foam, in the comparison between falsehood and foam. Foam denotes bubbles which appear on top of water: when man looks at a water basin full of soap foam, he sees bubbles floating and going up and down. If a person looks at that water basin for the first time, it is the foam which attracts his attention and he becomes heedless of the water under that water basin and is the source of that foam. He imagines that reality is this same foam which appears on top of the water floating up and down and has various colors, despite the fact that the foam has acquired its reality from that same water and is itself under the auspices of water.

The world is synthesized of right and falsehood, but falsehood exists as a parasitical companion of right. It is possible for falsehood to become more manifest than right,

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۱- Surat al-Ra'd ۱۳:۱۷.

to have a lot of sparkling, to have a lot of bloom and thrive, but in the laws [or principles] of nature right is like water and falsehood is like its foam and does not last long and becomes exterminated and that which endures is right that is beneficial to people.

Falsehood, like foam, is manifest for a few moments and after that, reveals its true reality and truth. Of course, once we measure these moments with our standards, we think that one moment ought not to last more than a few seconds or a minute, but a hundred and also a thousand years are nothing more than one moment for the One who has total knowledge of the past eternity and the future eternity; His standards are different from our criteria.

The criteria which we employ in measuring times and immortality [or continued existence] of things differ from the standards of [Allah] the Right. The length of times,

whether it were a moment, an hour, a year or a century, does not have any credibility for someone whose perception conceives right. He perceives what is beyond our sights and conceives horizons which are very high and enduring and when he takes those criteria and standards into account, falsehood is not a matter worth paying .[attention to and it lacks endurance [or continued existence

The Visible Appearance of Right and Falsehood

The theme of the Noble Prophet's (S) words in this section is that right is heavy and bitter and falsehood is light and sweet. To explain this

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sentence, it ought to be said that a believer who is pre-occupied with the prosperity of the hereafter must take the exigencies of his faith into consideration, reflect about his spiritual and psychological perfection and get rid of all the hurdles of the way and .attain his aim

It is natural for a believer who is at the beginning of the journey to expect everything to be light, easy, pleasant and sweet. He has not made himself ready to bear hardships and bitterness; it is for this reason that he is likely to stumble along the way and trespass the bounds of right and/or if as before he carries on along that way, he is sad and worried about all the hardships and problems along the path of good and .right

The question is always asked of man regarding why right is heavy and bitter and man is confronted by strenuous hardships but on the contrary falsehood is easy and sweet. Perhaps, this query may arise that, God forbid, is Allah stingy and does not let His friends derive benefit from the pleasures and sweetness of the world and places on their shoulders heavy and hard duties? What prevented Him from making right sweet so that all the people might become followers of the truth and not be ?misguided

When we compare the life of a believing person with that of an infidel, we observe that a believer has to endure a lot of problems; we notice how he has to kill

themselves

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in order to procure one piece of licit bread, how he has so many problems with his family, mate, children and neighbors. In contrast, his corrupt and licentious neighbor or relative has a pleasurable and pleasant life and has no problem whatsoever.

As a result of this comparison, he asks this question, "Why does Allah who, according to uncountable hadiths, loves the believers and has heaped a lot of praise on them, confront them with these encumbrances and hardships? Consider how much a believer has to suffer pains in order to procure the needs of his lives. Once he has made up his mind to marry, he sometimes has to search for years to find a suitable mate. Wherever he goes to ask for a girl's hand in marriage, they feign disdain and do not give him a wife. But the others easily select wives of their choice.

This same comparison exists between believing and infidel societies; when we compare the Muslim people of Bosnia-Herzegovina with their non-Muslim neighbors, we ask ourselves why the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina have to endure all these hardships and tragedies. Why do the unbelievers live in peace in their vicinity and neighborhood and the Muslim nation has to every moment bear seeing their lives, properties and families being trampled underfoot and for the callous Serb nation to prevail over them? If Allah is a Supporter of the believers, then why does He not help them?

These questions arise in different forms for us and every person

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has a response to them suiting his knowledge. But in any case, ambiguities exist for most of us. Perhaps, the people whose faith is mightier say that what occurs is based on the expedience of Allah.

There is no opportunity here to embark upon academic issues in order to give responses to these questions, amongst them the question as to why right is bitter and

why Allah has not made it sweet so that all people might be inclined to it and not be seduced to falling into perdition and our aim is to derive practicable results from and strive to make the matter clear because if an issue does not completely become clear for man, it does not leave an impressive effect on the heart and/or the Devil seduces him and by bringing doubts up becomes a hurdle of effective fruits in the heart and after the clarification of issues and overcoming the hurdles, there no longer remains .any room for doubts and the Devil's insinuations

Man and His Free Will, Volition and Allah's Temptations

Man's life in the world is founded on choosing the correct path and traversing the stages of perfection of his own volition. Man's most outstanding quality is that he is free and at liberty as regards his movements and spiritual wayfaring. Allah created existents like angels which only have an inclination towards right and even if their actions are volitional, their disposition is still only directed towards right and adoration of Allah and they have no tendency towards falsehood. Worship of Allah is

.sweet and pleasurable for them

Therefore, the order of nature is not devoid of existents which only have a tendency towards right and are exclusively preoccupied with servitude of Allah. For this reason, the will of Allah is dependent upon His creating an existent whose position is higher and loftier than that of the angels; that is why He made a human being who in spite of having an inclination to falsehood and the carnal soul, will trudge the path of his perfection of his own volition. Man ought to forsake the pleasure of sin in order to .attain eternal prosperity

If this existent tramples the appetitive soul underfoot and seeks the path of bliss, he will, without the least doubt, ascend higher than the angels for the reason that in spite of being faced with two conflicting dispositions, he of his own choice and volition .abstains from his pleasures and procures the spirit of worship and adoration of Allah

What has been gathered is that man in the world has two paths in front of him: one is

the way of right and the other is the course of falsehood. Of course, it ought to be borne in mind that it is not true that once man selects any one of those two courses, .he is compelled to keep trudging that path

With regard to what has previously been mentioned—that man is a free-willed and unrestrained existent—it must be admitted that as this free-will and volition is existent in

the initial selection of the way and path, so too is it existent in its constancy. For this reason, man always has the capacity to change his direction and course and he is endlessly free and at liberty when confronted by the two paths of right and falsehood. One of those two ways is the course of Allah and the other is the path of the Devil; one is the course of spiritual ascension and perfection and the other is the path of .decadence and condemnation

The other point which ought to be taken into consideration is that the world is a place of tests and trials and naturally it denotes a time when man is confronted by bitterness and hardships and comes out of the test triumphant by bearing with .patience those hardships

If spiritual ascendancy and perfection were sweet at first sight for man and falsehood and decadence were bitter, tests would be devoid of purport because trials call for man to forsake his desires and wishes and perform deeds for Allah and in the case that right were to appear sweet at first sight, man would disincline himself from the bitter falsehood and incline towards the sweet right for his own sake and for the good .pleasure of Allah

In the same way, if all falsehood were sweet and the course of right were devoid of any sweetness and pleasure, a person who abstained from falsehood and selected ,the correct path would be deprived of all pleasures; therefore

.it is not true at all that there is absolutely no gratification along the course of right

In any case, right is heavy and falsehood is bitter and it is natural for a person who has chosen the right course of his own volition to patiently bear all the bitterness and hardships of the path of right. Of course, Allah's divine decree is not the same for all people, because the capacity of all individuals is not of the same manner and not all human beings have the capability to endure every kind of affliction and hardship; it is for this reason that Allah has a special divine decree for every human being; He decrees tribulations and problems for some people in their youth and for others in their old age. He afflicts one man with illness and another with poverty. He tries one man by means of his spouse and the other through his friend. It is not true that a believer will be guaranteed safety from any hardships and adversities because in this .case he would not attain perfection

For the reason that the world is a place of trials, a believer ought to strengthen his faith by means of enduring hard times and prove his loyalty to divine laws and his contentment with the divine will of Allah. With all certainty, this is a very hard undertaking, but he ought to patiently go through all these tribulations because he professes to be believer. But the infidel has

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no such affirmation; on the contrary he has no familiarity with Allah and the truth. He wishes to be at ease in this transient world and whatever happens later is not a matter of his concern. If he performs good works in this world at all, Allah grants him :his reward right in this world

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيـدُ الْحَيوهَ الدُّنْيا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ اِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لاَ يُبْخَسُونَ * أَوْلَئِك لَيْسَ لَهْمْ فِى الآخِرَهِ الاَّ النَّارُ وَحبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَا كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

Whoever desires this world's life and its finery, We will pay them in full their deeds" therein, and they shall not be made to suffer loss in respect of them. These are they for whom there is nothing in the hereafter, and what they wrought in it shall go for (nothing, and vain is what they do."(۱

For this reason, people who seek the truth ought to be ready to endure tribulations and adversities and be content with whatever occurs because this is the exigency of selecting the right path. If an individual does not have the capacity to endure hardships, he must select a course other than the path of right. Advancement, perfection and the super human spiritual stations are not attainable save by means of .perseverance in the face of tribulations

The secret truth is that right is bitter and falsehood is sweet and that the seeker of right ought to choose the right path of his own volition and be tried for his

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۱- Surat Hud ۱۱:۱۵-۱۶.

choice. If it were not like this, no human being would be tried and without the least doubt this trial is for the purpose of measuring the standard of faith and piety of individuals and their disposition to right and the other purpose is also to make clear ?the extent to which they prefer the will of Allah over their carnal souls

Therefore, there ought to be hard and tiresome duties so that man may by exercising piety and contentment with the will of Allah and patience in the face of tribulations traverse the course of perfection. If all duties were easy and simple, all the people of the world would become Muslims and the prominence and distinction of any person .would not become clear

It is in the battlefield of adversities, hardships, overlooking the carnal desires and putting the will and pleasure of Allah first that a prominent person like Salman Farsi shows himself and in arriving at the zenith and pinnacle of human perfection, leaves the rest of the people behind and attains the highest levels of completion and human .ascendancy

There is room here to relate the story of one of the 'ulama' (Islamic scholars) and great mystics, the late Ilahi Qumshe'i, may Allah be pleased with him. He was a great and emancipated man. This prominent and earnest man translated the Gracious

Qur'an and did not receive any payment for doing that invaluable job despite that if he had got the right of publication, he and

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his family would have lived in ease and leisure. He sometimes used to drive himself to the university on a tripod wheeled machine despite being a university lecturer.

On one of his journeys to the holy city of Mashhad, once he had entered the holy shrine of Imam al-Rida ('a), it occurred to him that he ought to ask for the station of contentment [rida'] from the Imam ('a). This is what impelled him to say, "Your Holiness! Your name is al-Rida (lit. pleasure), and I have come into your house.

Ask Allah to grant me the station of rida' (being well-pleased and content with whatever pleases Allah or is decreed by Him)." When he was coming out of the holy mausoleum and was heading towards home, he was accidentally hit by a car as a result of which he got injured and his bone got broken. The people gathered and arrested the driver, but the late Qumshe'i addressed them thus, "Leave him alone and let him go free. This is a gift from Imam al-Rida. I asked him for the station of contentment and submission to Allah's decree and I have attained it. If this accident did not occur, it would not become clear whether I have attained the station of contentment or not. I have to prove beyond the shadow of doubt that I am pleased with whatever pleases Allah and am not sad at all!"

Man and the Two Inclinations towards Right and Falsehood

Man has two different attractions in two directions; circumstances have to be provided

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in order to clarify to what man is more inclined when faced with two antagonistic inner attractions towards right and falsehood. Sometimes, the right deed which he carries out is not opposed and is not at conflict with his desire and wish; in this case discharging that work is not difficult.

The problem lies where there is antagonism and disagreement between these two pulls; the devil commands one thing and Allah orders other than that, the carnal soul demands one thing and Allah enjoins the opposite of it. It is in these circumstances .that man becomes an object of trials and the value of deeds becomes apparent

In this case, the more the allurement towards sin and the more an individual tramples his carnal soul underfoot and opposes it, the more he will earn reward and that resistance against the appetitive soul has more considerable fruits in the perfection of .man’s heart and soul

The value of a youth who in spite of having feelings and strong instinctive inclinations towards pleasures of the flesh but abstains from sin which is suitable with his youth is more than the worth of an old man who forsakes that sin. It is not difficult for an old man to abstain from that sin because he is not very inclined to that sin. In this case, the reward of that youth is more and in contrast if that old man commits that sin, his guilt is more because he was not under any pressure and was

p: ۳۳۰

(.not so inclined to that evil deed. (It is very ugly for an old man to commit adultery

If, Allah forbid, a youth finds himself on the verge of committing sin such as adultery or fornication and succeeds at prevailing over his animal instincts and passion, he ascends high spiritual stations and forsaking that sin brings to hand immense perfection because he has succeeded at overlooking sin as a result of a lot of inner effort and intense love for Allah and high faith. It is therefore natural for sin to be sweet in this world and for right to be bitter so that man may be tried and thus it will become clear who preferred Allah over everything else and who preferred right over .the carnal soul and who chose to pursue falsehood instead of right

Of course, it is self-evident that the nobility and eminence of man is dependent upon perfection being volitional and a fruit of free-will. He ought to be absolutely free and at liberty when combating the carnal soul and perform good works and forsake evil .deeds of his own volition and for the sake of love of Allah and His pleasure

It has been said that right is bitter and falsehood is sweet; but the sweetness of sin and the bitterness of sin is meant for ordinary people, not everyone. Ordinary people, on the basis of their natural disposition, pursue the desires and wishes of their hearts and duties which impose restrictions on them are hard

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and unbearable. In contrast, falsehood is for them light and easy, because they do not .see any hardships and restrictions in doing it

It is very easy for man to utter vain and futile words, but once he decides to say meaningful things, he ought to reflect upon every word of his speech lest he utters void words and it is misconstrued as gossip, false accusation or slander and lest he makes fun of and torments someone. In that case, he meditates about the effects and fruits of his words. But if he wants to utter futile and vain words, he opens his .mouth and utters whatever empty words he wishes

The reason why it has been stated that the bridge over hell is thinner than a hair is because man ought to take the destination and the provisions of this journey into consideration whatever step he intends to take and whatever course he sets foot on along that path. He ought to ask himself whether Allah is pleased with his course or not. He ought to take the motive and incentive of every work into consideration and guard over his tongue lest he utters whatever crosses his mind and he must watch .over his eyes to avoid looking everywhere and at everything or everyone

Without doubt, observance of all its aspects is very hard and equal to performing toilsome duties. In contrast, if man intends to do everything according the futile whims and desires of his heart, he lives

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easily and with pleasure and sweetness. Beyond the shadow of doubt, all adversities of the believer are confined to this world and he will not have any pains and hardships :in the eternal Garden of bliss

الَّذی أَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَهِ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لاَ یَمَسُّنَا فِیهَا نَصَبٌ وَلاَ یَمَسُّنَا فِیهَا لُغُوبٌ

Who has made us alight in a house abiding forever out of His grace; toil shall not“ (touch us therein, nor shall fatigue therein afflict us.”(۱

Not only is the eternal Garden of bliss devoid of hardships and tribulations, and nothing similar to what is in the world exists there but also even the dwellers of paradise do not feel hunger too but, on the contrary, feel appetite for food and derive pleasure from it. In contrast, the nature of this world's life is intertwined with pain and hardships and everyone is confronted with adversities and encumbrances whether he :is a believer or unbeliever

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الإِنْسَانَ فی کَبَدٍ

(Certainly we have created man to be in distress.”(۲“

This same world is different for the believers and the infidels, the lovers and companions of right and the lovers of falsehood. Those obsessed with falsehood enjoy relative ease and comfort and have a sweet experience from life but in contrast .life is bitter for a believer and lovers of the truth

Of course, it is not true that the entire course of the lives of believers and the friends of right are encompassed by bitterness; on the contrary, the bitterness of the world is for

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۱- Surat Fatir ۳۵:۳۵.
۲- Surat al-Balad ۹۰:۴.

them relative. There are special pleasures too reserved for the saints [awliya'] of Allah. They too derive pleasure from eating and sleeping, but their tribulations and .encumbrances in the world are more than the adversities of the people of falsehood

For the reason that man grows and is nurtured on the laps of nature, he naturally

initially feels the sweetness and pleasures of the natural cosmos. His sense of taste is more prepared for the perception of worldly, material and sensual pleasures; it takes long for him to attain a spiritual experience and disposition. By means of volitional spiritual journeying along the right course and habituating himself with good deeds and enduring the tribulations of life and forsaking material gratifications, man gradually tastes the spiritual pleasures and sweetness of right. This is a truth which :the Gracious Qur'an hints at too

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلوهِ وَاِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلاَّ عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and most surely it is a hard thing" (except for the humble ones."(١)

Allah states that prayer is a hard and heavy burden for all the people except the humble ones. Some people wake up early in the morning and get busy with exercise and work-out and perform heavy duties but feel lazy when they want to perform two rak'ats (cycles) of prayer. They do not wake up from sleep in order to pray but arise from sleep to do exercise often times take up to one hour exercising, running and/or !mountain climbing

They do so

١- Surat al-Baqarah ٢:۴۵.

because their sense of taste does not perceive the feel of prayer. He feels the pleasure and benefit of exercise and he derives gratification because it has been said that exercise is beneficial and invigorating for the body. In contrast, his faith is not so strong and he does not believe nor has faith in the words of Allah, the Noble Prophet .((S) and Infallible Imams ('a

For humble people and men who have known Allah and have believed in Him, not only is prayer not a heavy and expensive burden, but is easy and pleasure-giving. Because

they have attained spiritual maturity, they find affection and fondness with Allah during prayer and feel so much satisfaction from prayer that they do not desire to .bring their prayers to an end

For them, there is no pleasure higher than prayer and invocation of Allah; it is for this reason that some of the great scholars have stated, "If the emperors of the world knew what pleasure lies in prayer, they would forsake the empires and purse nothing else but prayer." For the prophets ('a), the saints [awliya'] of Allah and those who have been trained on their school, right is so sweet and gratifying that they feel as though they have lost their most beloved person once they go beyond the bounds of right. They have become so fond of the right path and doing good deeds and have fallen so much in love with it that once they quit doing

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a good work, they feel as though they have lost an item from which it is not feasible to detach one's heart. People who have a habit of keeping vigil at night feel very .distressed once they fail to wake at night to engage in prayer and invocation of Allah

The General Inclination to Sensual and Worldly Pleasures

Taking into consideration the fact that most of the people have an inclination to sensual and worldly pleasures, the point of discourse is that what ought man to do in order to remain on the course of perfection and to have the capacity to fight against materialistic leanings and set foot on the path of right in spite of feeling the animal ?instincts and pleasures of the flesh in himself

In response to this query, it ought to be said that pleasure-seeking has been embedded in man's natural disposition and man's motivation for doing deeds is the gratification which he brings to hand. We do deeds which please us and keep aloof from what is displeasing to us. We conceive pleasure for ourselves even in the vanity and sin which we do but the way to forsake it is to reflect upon the fruits, consequences and encumbrances which result from sin, or meditate upon the .pleasures that are a result of good works

Even if enduring the hardships of good and right deeds is exhaustive, but still if the pleasing benefits and fruits of good deeds are taken into consideration, bearing those tribulations becomes easy for us. In reality, people have this

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:kind of comparison when performing the hard and difficult chores of life

The laborer who embarks upon hard work early in the morning with motivation and works up to night time in sweat derives pleasure from enduring all hardships because he is engrossed in thinking about the fruits of his work. The baker who sometimes bakes bread at fifty degrees of heat bears all hardships because he earns a wage with which he procures the needs of his life. When he ponders about the results of his work and conceives that some of his problems in life will be solved, he derives benefit .from life and he easily bears the pains of his work

In reality, enduring these hardships is reasonable and all people are such that once they have compared hardships with pleasures, they do that which will grant them more gratification. If they earn more profit and wages from their occupation, in the end they attain more satisfaction. In truth, they do not directly derive pleasure from the profit and benefit of their labor, but it is a means by which to derive pleasure; he procures a house and the amenities of his life with the money which he earns from his work. For this reason, an intelligent man endures the hardships of work in order to .bring to hand higher pleasure in the end

An intelligent man keeps aloof from using drugs and his transient pleasure because he ponders about his long term ill effects. He knows

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that he will derive pleasure for a few seconds and feels high, but he will be miserable for the rest of his life. If we admit that no matter how sweet and pleasurable sin might be, what consequences and encumbrances it gives birth to—if in the world we are not with bad consequences, beyond the shadow of doubt we will be encountered by them

in the hereafter—it is for this reason that we keep aloof from using drugs. We also forsake sin because we fear lest we are entangled in eternal divine retribution .because of it

Transient pleasure which results in protracted regrets and entanglements appears in various forms nowadays. In the past, there used to be only alcohol which used to intoxicate man and thereafter the ill and undesirable consequences would become visible; but nowadays different kinds of drugs have been added to them. A bad friend deceives man by explaining the pleasure and high which lies in a substance like heroin .and impels him to use it

Man feels pleasure the first time he uses it, uses it once more and finally becomes an addict and miserable for the rest of his life. Other sins too are like this. If we were to reflect upon the entanglements which the sin we are about to commit gives rise to, we would certainly keep aloof from it. In addition to the hereafter, a lot of sins have ill consequences right in this world. Sometimes, one licentious look at a strange

person makes the entire life of a person miserable and a household crumbles as a result of that licentious look. This is one of the consequences of sin in this world; the :divine retribution and requital of the next world have not yet been inflicted

فَأَذَاقَهُم اللهُ الْخِزْیَ فِی الْحَیوهَ الدُّنْیا وَلَعَذَابُ الآخِرَهِ أَکْبَرُ لَوْ کَانُوا یَعْلَمُونَ

So Allah made them taste the disgrace in this world’s life, and certainly the“)punishment of the hereafter is great; did they but know.”(١

:Elsewhere, it states

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِی الْحَیوهَ الدُّنْیا وَلَعَذَابُ الآخِرَهِ أَشَقُّ...

They shall have chastisement in this world’s life, and the punishment of the hereafter“)is certainly more grievous...”(٢

Therefore, by comparing the pleasure of sin with its consequences, we ought to try

not to be contaminated by sin; especially before the attraction of sin affects us and we are not on the verge of sin, keeping aloof from sin is very easy because once the allurement of sin has had an effect in us and we have arrived on the verge of sin, it is very difficult to abstain from it. There was a great man, may Allah have mercy on him, who used to say that the youths ought to request Allah to tranquilize the carnal desires because in other than that case extinguishing them is difficult.

Until man has not gone under the influence of carnal desires and/or anger, he is peaceful and he is capable of reflecting and making decisions and self-inspection so that he may have the

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۱- ۳۹:۲۶ Surat al-Zumar.

۲- ۱۳:۳۴ Surat al-Ra'd.

ability to resist the temptation to sin. But if he does not pre-decide and pre-meditate, he does not find the opportunity to think at the time of enticement by carnal desires or when overtaken by anger because the intellect is put out once man is enticed by carnal desires.

Besides the carnal desires and anger, the Devil has other means and forces too for misleading man, some of which are social causes: in the society, everyone naturally wants to be like the others. This is a psychological and spiritual cause which appears in man in his early days of life. Of course, this cause, like the rest of the causes, has both negative and positive results. What is necessary is to know the bounds of good and evil and derive benefit from this cause to the correct extent so that man does not blindly follow and imitate.

Conformity with the others in most cases is a cause of man's deliverance from destruction; a lot of youths who had the inclination of being like their good friend have been pulled to the mosque. So many youths went to the battlefield under the auspices of this very cause. In the beginning, they were not so interested in going to the battleground, when they noticed their friends and the boys in the neighborhood going

.to the battlefront; they too got attracted to fighting

These are the good effects that this cause has. In contrast, in an environment which is corrupt and depraved, this very

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cause becomes a means of getting disposed to sin, especially among adolescents and youths because adolescents and youths quickly acquire the characteristics of those around them and do not resist an indecent environment that much. But the factor of seeking to be like the others is weaker in those older and they seldom copy the .characteristics of other people

The role models for youths are either the majority of the community and/or prominent individuals and/or advanced nations. Once there exists in most of the people an inclination, a person is after imitating a role model tells himself that most of the people are normal and not mad; therefore, their actions are correct. Thereafter, he goes under the influence of that cause which we have mentioned and follows the majority of the people. It is for this reason that we see some of the people under the influence of this cause and they are allured to corruption; especially if the majority of .the community is depraved

Lesson ۲۳:The Perfect Scholar and the Practical Appearance of Belief in the Unity of Divine Actions

point

In continuation of the Noble Prophet's (S) recommendations, we come to a section regarding the unity of divine actions [tawhid-i af'ali] which stands in need of exposition: belief in monotheism [tawhid] has several stages, the lowest level of which is conviction in monotheism in Islam and every person who believes in that is considered as monotheist [muwahhid] from the viewpoint of Islam; belief in absolute unity of the Essence and divine Attributes of Allah and conviction in the existential sovereignty [rububiyyat-i takwini] of Allah and

the institutional lordship [rububiyyat-i tashri'i] of Allah(۱) and also certitude that the only object of worship is Allah. After this stage are other stages, one of which is .[conviction in the unity of divine actions [tawhid-i af'ali

The unity of divine actions denotes that man ought to comprehend first by knowledge and later on by intuition or inner witnessing that the real Influencer [or the only true One who causes or affects] in the cosmos is Allah, the Exalted, and there is no existent independent in effect. (Whether this belief is or is not compatible with the issue of free will and responsibility has been discussed in theological and philosophical discourses (.and there is no opportunity for us to engage in that now

As has been mentioned, there are two stages for the unity of divine actions; the first level is conviction in the unity of divine actions as a result of definite, deductive and demonstrative reasoning and knowledge that there is no existent which is in itself independent and every existent is like a connection and attachment to the Cause (Allah). All the effects and influences and causes and effects spring from the divine Essence of Allah. Even if this stage of belief in the unity of divine actions is very important and invaluable, still its worth is not the same with the value of the stage of .inner witnessing or vision of the unity of divine actions

The second stage: after attaining knowledge in regard to the unity of

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۱ - Monotheism in existential lordship [rububiyyat-i takwini] denotes that the management and will of the world is in the hands of Allah, the Exalted, and that we ought to believe that the revolving of the moon and the sun and the appearance of the day and the night, and that the life and death of human beings and giving subsistence to creatures is in the hands of Allah and it is He who safeguards the skies and the earth. In the same way, every existent which comes to appearance in this expansive world, and grows and multiplies, and every existential effect which appears from it, are all at the same time under the divine management and will and there are

no phenomena which exist outside the realm of Allah. Institutional lordship [rububiyyat-i tashri'i] is related to the volitional management of people. Among all the creatures of Allah, only people have free will and control over their development and .gradual perfection

divine actions, man perceives and becomes convinced by way of spiritual wayfaring and traversing and mystical intuition and vision that the real Influencer [mu'aththir] in the cosmos is only Allah. It is at this stage that he perceives that all else other than Allah, according to their strength and weakness, have no independent effect in the destiny of man and it is the will of Allah which has penetration and appears in the .causes and agents

Abraham and Belief in the Unity of Divine Actions

The best example of those who believe in the unity of divine actions and believe that the order of causes and effects is attached to the divine will and authority and have certitude that independent influencing is only a unique right especially confined to Allah, and do not take anyone save Allah as their safe haven and shelter, are the prophets (S) and frontrunners of religion. Here, we will mention the most excellent role model of the monotheists, a man who feared no one in calling people to the divine .(path, and he was none other than Prophet Abraham ('a

After resisting and not surrendering to the polytheists and idol-worshippers of Babylon, and after he had been breaking idols in their absence and after returning to their cities when they asked who had broken their idols, he used to engage in debate with them and used to prove as false and void their unfounded beliefs by means of sound and clear reasoning so much so that they did not have any response in the face

of his strong logic and the only option they had was to throw him in the fire of their :wrath

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانْصُرُوا الِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ

(They said: Burn him and help your gods, if you are going to do anything.”(1)“

After that they gathered a lot of wood and cast him into the core of the fire. At that moment, Prophet Abraham (‘a) only set his attention on the divine Essence of Allah, to the extent that Imam al-Baqir (‘a) states:

On that day, Prophet Abraham (‘a) only said,

« يَا أَحَدُ يَا أَحَدُ يَا صَمَدُ يَا صَمَدُ يَا مَنْ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ »

“O One! O One! O Refuge! O Refuge! O He who begets not, nor is He begotten, O He whom none is like [Him].”

(After that, he said, “I only rely on You.”(2)

He had so much faith in Allah and was so firm in his faith that he used to perceive his entire being as being in need of the divine Essence and did not ask any one for help, not even the angels in the proximity of Allah.

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states:

“When they cast Abraham in the fire, the arch-angel Gabriel, who was in a state of descending from the sky, saw him and said, ‘Do you need help and assistance?’ His Holiness Prophet Abraham (‘a) said, ‘But not from you’.”(3)

This discourse of Prophet Abraham (‘a), which has been narrated by both the Shi‘ahs and Sunnis, denotes the high level of

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1- Surat al-Anbiya’ ۲۱:۶۸.
2- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۱۴, p. ۳۰۷.
3- Ibid., p. ۳۰۸.

monotheism in the spirit and soul of this divine champion and it is this belief and spirit which made him befitting of receiving invisible help; Allah commanded the fire to

become cold. They say that the fire got so cold that Prophet Abraham (‘a) begun shaking and gritting his teeth, so that Allah once again ordered the fire to become suitable and sound for him. The Archangel Gabriel descended and sat down with .Abraham in the fire and they began to converse

:Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states

Qanbar, Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) slave, loved Imam ‘Ali (‘a) very much and armed with a“ sword, he used to follow Imam ‘Ali (‘a) whenever His Holiness left the house and went out. One night, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) saw him and asked, ‘O Qanbar! What is that you are doing?’ Qanbar answered, ‘O Amir al-Mu’minin! I came behind you in order to protect you.’ Imam ‘Ali (‘a) stated, ‘Woe upon you! Are you protecting me from the dwellers of the skies or the dwellers of the earth?’ Qanbar answered, ‘Not from the dwellers of the skies, but from the inhabitants of the earth.’ His Holiness replied, ‘The inhabitants of the earth cannot harm me save with Allah’s permission, therefore, return and go (back.’ Qanbar returned as ordered.”(۱

Reliance on Everything Else Other than Allah Is a Result of Lack of Belief in the Unity of Divine Actions

What has been mentioned is a reflection of the belief in the unity of divine actions in the human perception, temperament and behavior of man and that man ought to rely only on Allah and not pay any heed

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.Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ۳, p. ۹۸ -۱

to anything else other than Allah regardless that before arriving at the stage of inner witnessing of the unity of divine actions, man depends on other people and imagines that he is in need of them and hopes that they will provide his needs and solve his .problems

Or, he fears that they will harm him. In reality, he believes in the independence of causes and effects in influencing events and puts his faith in them. With all certainty,

this trend is not compatible with monotheistic thinking. The exigency of monotheistic knowledge is that man ought not to give his heart to and not rely on all else save Allah. :In this regard, the Noble Prophet (S) states

O Abu Dharr! A man does not attain perfect comprehension and complete“ scholarship until he perceives people as camels lacking in understanding being moved by Allah, the Exalted, and then he looks at himself and sees himself lower than all of ”.them

It is interesting that the Noble Prophet’s (S) expression is that no person is a perfect scholar until he perceives the will of people in the hands of other than them, like camels whose harnesses are in the hands of the camel driver and he guides the drove of camels and they have no free will of their own. Selecting the course of direction, arranging and managing duties are controlled by the one in whose hands are their .harnesses

In the beginning, man fantasizes that other people are independent in their

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movements, in their wars and victories and the events that come to pass. But when his cognition grows and he attains monotheistic knowledge, he conceives them as a convoy of camels whose harnesses are in the hands of someone else and the order of the movements of these causes as being in the hands of Allah. It is true that the causes and effects are at work and this order is in a state of movement, this order is not a series of movements. There is someone who has gotten the reigns and .harnesses of these horses in his hands

Of course, this does not imply that people are under compulsion, but the point is that absolute influencing is not in their hands; it is not true that they are the doers of all their deeds and the deciders of their affairs. They are under the influence of another order and a will above the human will controls them. Therefore, a monotheist is a person who does not forget Allah and does not overlook the hand of Allah in the order .of the cosmos; in other than this case, he has not comprehended monotheism

Of course, explaining this matter is not easy and exposition does not play a fundamental role in perceiving and understanding this reality, on the contrary we ought to ask Allah to grant us the grace to conceive these realities.

Man ought not to feel safe from the insinuations of the accursed Devil for the reason that

the Devil never at all leaves man free on his own. The Devil strives harder at misleading those who have set foot on the right course and are traversing the path of perfection. But weak people go after the Devil of their own volition and there is no need for the Devil to deviate them.

Shaykh Ansari and His Flight from the Devil's Trap

There is a well-known story that a person during the days of the deceased Shaykh Ansari saw the Devil in his dreams with ropes of various colors in his hands. Some ropes were green, red and orange and some of those ropes were thin and the others were thick. Among those ropes, he saw a very thick rope which had gotten broken. He asked the Devil what those ropes were. These are ropes with which I deceive and trap the son of Adam. That person asked about every one of the ropes. He was told which rope was a woman, which one was a house, money and position. That man asked which one of the ropes was his trap.

The Devil replied that there was no need to have a rope for trapping that man because he was so weak that he followed the Devil of his own volition. These ropes were for throwing around the necks of people who did not follow the Devil and by this means force them to come after me. That man asked whose the broken rope was. The Devil replied that he had taken lots of pains to make

that rope ready with purpose of trapping Shaykh Ansari but last night when the Devil cast it around the neck of the Shaykh, he broke it with one shaking of the head. After

.saying that, the Devil gave out a loud painful cry

That person woke up from sleep and spent the rest of the night sad and worried about what had occurred. Early in the morning, he went to visit Shaykh Ansari and related the dream to him. The Shaykh began crying and said, "Last night the time for my wife was about to deliver arrived and the midwife and the other neighboring women said a woman in child labor ought to consume oil and ordered me to go and buy a little oil. I did not have any money with which to buy the needed oil. The only money with me was two tumans(۱) of the portion of the Imam [sahm-i imam] which I had put aside to give to anyone entitled to it. I got that same money with the intention .of buying oil for my wife

Along the way, all of a sudden, it occurred to me that what if the wife of another religious student got in labor tonight and that religious student did not have any money with which to buy oil? I told myself that perhaps in the outskirts of Najaf there is a student whose wife will get into labor and they have no money to buy oil for her. At once, I

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returned home and put the money back in its place and said my wife will deliver with .or without oil

This was the trap which the Devil had set for me and he had been expecting and planning for this opportunity for nine months now. He intended me to take possession of the portion of the Imam but Allah granted me the grace to tear the Devil's trap and .rope

Yes the Devil devotes his effort to mislead people who have set foot on the course of perfection and trudging the path of completion. When man attains levels of perfection and awareness and his heart becomes enlightened and manifestations of monotheism become indisputably evident, or the unveilings of inspiration become

apparent to him, he sees or hears something, the Devil visits man without the least delay and incites him that you have attained very high stations and you are very .different from the rest of the people

When man becomes successful at attaining this level of awareness of understanding that other people are not independent influencers and they do not have such value so as to impel man to bow down before them for an amount of money and/or ask them for a favor, all of a sudden, the Devil insinuates him to think that he has attained very high levels and has become very important. In this instance, man becomes afflicted .by pride

It is with the intention to prevent such pride that the Noble Prophet (S) states that

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man ought to perceive the rest of the people as though they were camels next to Allah. Without any delay, he says that man ought to conceive himself as lower than everyone else. Perceive yourself as not just similar to the others, but even lower than the others and as a link in the chain of existents just like the rest of the links and the .chain of all the movements of creatures is in His hands

Therefore, if a person attains scholarship in religion, firstly he compares the rest of the creatures with Allah and perceives them as nothing, secondly he compares himself with the rest of the creatures and conceives them as better than himself, and .this is a very surprising quality

That is to say, Allah grants such grace to man, on the one hand, to perceive human beings as ineffective as regards influencing his life and does not give any value to them, and, on the other hand, observe legal customs. In spite of the fact that he does not believe in the role [or function or influence] of any human being, his humility, manners and respect in regard to them does not decrease. He observes legal .manners and truly perceives himself as humbler than the rest of the people

On the other hand, he perceives human beings similar to burden bearing camels in

contrast to Allah whose harnesses are in the control of them and, on the other hand, perceives himself as smaller than the

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camels. He ought not to imagine that once he has perceived the rest of the people as camels, then he ought to fancy that he himself is their rider! On the contrary, he ought to perceive himself as both smaller and lower than the others and admit the meanness of his soul.

Of course, with this kind of perception, it is hard for man to count himself as small and be humble and modest; but this is possible and is real in the objective world. If man perceives this issue and at the same time not believe in the effect and role of other human beings, and also have perfect humility and modesty in regard to them, the responses to a lot of religious queries which exist in the divine sciences become clear.

In reality, with this exposition, the Noble Prophet (S) clarifies the limits of humility and that humility does not denote that a human being ought to make himself weak and servile in the face of other people. On the contrary, the humility expounded in the words of the Noble Prophet (S) increases the honor and greatness of man.

Humility Is an Agent of Dignity and Honor

It has been related in a hadith that Hasan ibn Jahm asked Imam al-Rida ('a) about the limit of humility. In response, His Holiness ('a) said:

"Humility has stages; one of those stages is that man ought to comprehend his value and esteem, and with peace of mind and of his own free will, attain his rightful position and behave with

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people in the same way that they behave with him and if they have behaved kindly with him, he ought to behave in kind with them, and if they have behaved badly with him, he swallows his anger and forgives the people and Allah too loves the doers of

(good."(1)

Beyond the shadow of doubt, such humility not only is not a cause of lowliness and servility, but also increases the honor and dignity of man. The Prophet (S) states:

"... Verily, humility increases the station of man; then, be humble so that Allah increases your honor..."(2)

Some of the psychologists are of the opinion that if man perceives his self as lower and less valuable than the others, he is afflicted by an inferiority complex and in the end he cannot relate to the rest of the people; he cannot speak fluently, becomes afflicted by a lot of shyness and embarrassment and loses his self-confidence. He flees from the community and lives in isolation and solitude.

The question which arises is that how can a medium be struck between humility and self-confidence? That is to say, how ought we, on the one hand, to pursue humility and, on the other, preserve the soundness of psyche, and how must we preserve the vigor of our psyches at the same time as perceiving ourselves as smaller than the rest of the human beings?

It appears as though the fountainhead of a lot of psychological disorders in human beings (without having to overlook the role of

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۱- Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ۳, p. ۱۸۹, Kitab al-Iman wa al-Kufr.

۲- Ibid., p. ۱۸۵.

the household and the environment) is the lack of belief in Allah and the lack of man's reliance on the great source of divine inspiration: if man loses this fundamental and important point of reliance, a storm of psychological dilemmas and crises overcome him and his psyche becomes a target of the arrows of diseases and disorders.

But if he regulates all his actions and reactions according to heavenly criteria, he finds salvation from a great deal of psychological disorders; it is for this reason that

humility in the hadiths has been restricted only to modesty before Allah: “Whoever be humble before Allah, He increases his honor.”(١) If man’s humility before other human beings is only for the intention of pleasing Allah and his deeds were purely for Allah, he will never feel servile and low.

Therefore, humility is acceptable only if it results from purity of intention for none other than Allah, otherwise humility which is a product of weakness and inferiority complex is devoid of any value and there is no reward for it.

According to this analysis, it ought to be said that if man’s humility is only motivated by obedience and adoration of Allah, not only is it not a cause of weakness, but is also a cause of pride for man; that is to say, he perceives modesty as a way of adoring Allah and feels proud of it.

In the same way that falling on clay and grinding one’s forehead on the ground in prostration for

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١- Ibid.

the divine Essence does not cause lowliness in any believer at all, on the contrary, is gives rise to pride and honor in the same way that man’s humility in the face of other people, on the condition that it is done for the good pleasure of Allah and for the cause of executing his orders.

Imam al-Sajjad (‘a) and the Perception of Spiritual Deficiency and Poverty

By taking what has already been discussed into consideration, we can be helped to better understand why Imam al-Sajjad (‘a), in spite of being infallible and of pure soul, in the supplication he taught to Abu Hamzah al-Thumali, addresses Allah thus:

“... Who is in a state worse and bleaker than mine? If I am transferred to the grave right now, I have not made ready the provisions for my peace and tranquility...”

An Infallible Imam does not flatter any one and does not speak with the intention of) (.making funny jokes and all his words are serious

How the state of an Infallible Imam (‘a) can be worse than that of the rest of the people is an intricate enigma which gets solved once man has had an acquaintance with monotheistic sciences [or knowledge]. Once he perceives that all that he has is provided by Allah, he comprehends that whatever insufficiency that exists is ours and arises from our existential poverty. When we commit sin, it is either as a result of our lacking knowledge and our not knowing with Whom we are confronted and with Whom we are in opposition; or our resolution is so weak

.that we surrender ourselves to carnal desires and anger

All these are indicative of our weakness and man has nothing save weakness. What do we have of ourselves that was not granted to us by Allah? Knowledge, comprehension, thought, worship and the grace to adore Him and do good deeds and everything that we have are all gifts from Allah. They have all been allotted to us as a .result of divine grace

He has also placed at our disposal the means, otherwise we have nothing save those same modalities of non-being (weakness and insufficiency) and if we want to separate our accounting from Allah, what remains of us is an empty container; .assuming that this expression of an empty container is correct

We of ourselves neither have wealth nor understanding and the intellect; what we have is ignorance, lack of custom, deviated conception and weakness of resolution, .which are instances of imperfection and weakness

If weaknesses and imperfections are a cause of deviation and error, a person who has more weakness and imperfection has more likelihood of being misled. A human being who has more weakness and defects is the one who has more existential capacity; a container which is bigger has more volume and needs more items to be

filled up. When the existential capacity of man is more, he has to be granted more .perfection and in any case he has nothing from himself

One sparrow, in regard to its small size, has less capacity and Allah

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has granted it eyes, ears, the ability to fly and to make noisy sounds according to the limit of its capacity. If Allah divests it of all these capacities, your container will be empty of the size of one sparrow. But an elephant whose capacity is more, Allah has granted it limbs and members and ability and power according to its capacity. Now, if you divest it of all its capacities, its container becomes empty to the extent of one .elephant

Is our spiritual capacity the same as that of Imam al-Sajjad ('a)? Beyond the shadow of doubt, this is not true at all. Our capacity is very little and goes only so far as our understanding and intellect goes. It is for this reason that we will be chastised according to our capacity and never will we be held to account in the same way that Imam al-Sajjad ('a) will be held to account. The duties which the Noble Prophet (S) and the Imams ('a) are charged with can never at all be directed at us because we do not .have the ability to bear them

Therefore, our capacity is very limited in comparison to the capacity of the Infallible Imams; it is for this reason that our deficiencies and weaknesses are limited as well. When the Imam looks at the capacity which Allah has granted him, he witnesses a lot of weaknesses in himself because he has a great deal of capacity for what Allah has granted him

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and is going to grant. It is for this reason that when he looks at himself, he conceives that his weakness is more than the weaknesses of all the other human beings for the reason that his capacity is more. That is why he says, "Whose state is worse than "?mine

Is the sin of a mistake and error of an adolescent who has just attained the legal age to discharge religious obligations and has little knowledge the same as the sin of a scholar who has spent fifty years studying hadith and Qur'anic sciences and commits the same sin? Without the least doubt, the sin of that scholar is more because he has .more capacity and capability

The sin of that adolescent is very small because the understanding and capacity that he has is very limited, and taking into consideration the high capacity of that religious scholar, his sin is doubtlessly more and his retribution is going to be more severe. It is :for this reason that it has been narrated in a hadith

Seventy sins of an ignorant man will be forgiven before one sin of a scholar has ... " (been forgiven..."(١

The sin of an ignorant man is less, because his understanding and capacity is less. To grant an impossibility, if an Infallible Imam were to commit sin, his retribution is a thousand times more than the retribution of ordinary people because his perception .and capacity is more

When the Imam looks at himself, he conceives that whatever obedience

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.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٢, p. ٢٧ -١

and worship and praiseworthy deeds he has performed are all from Allah, the Exalted, and has been discharged with his grace and nothing remains of him save weakness and because he perceives his weakness more, he is more guilt ridden than the rest of the people. This was a justification and accounting for the words of Imam al-Sajjad .(('a

If man's inner eyes become more open and he is able to perceive realities more, he perceives how weak he is in the face of Allah. He conceives that there is no room to feel pride of and perceive his self. Was he not a drop of liquid which has been nurtured

?to attain this stage

Now that he has grown and attained physical perfection, has he brought himself to this stage so as to feel proud of himself? Therefore, if we truly look at ourselves, we perceive ourselves as lower and humbler than all the human beings; not that we ought to pretend to be humble.

It is hypocrisy for man to apparently appear humble and falsely claim with his tongue that he is lower and humbler than everyone else but perceive himself as better and higher than the rest of the people.

We ought to consider ourselves smaller and humbler than the rest of the people from the depths of our hearts. This state is not attainable save by means of divine grace and the light of awareness which Allah makes to shine in man's heart. I hope that Allah will

grant us this knowledge and awareness and even higher than that.

(The Fruits of True Faith in the Words of the Noble Prophet (S

In continuation of the hadith, the Prophet (S) says:

"O Abu Dharr! You cannot attain the reality and truth of religion unless you perceive as dull in regard to their religion and clever in regard to their world."

O Abu Dharr! Once you have perceived the reality of faith and you notice that other people have made advancements and are active in their lives in this transitory world, know that they are clever and have understanding and intelligence in regard to their lives in this transitory world but they are very ignorant and foolish in regard to their lives in the next world.

In the Noble Prophet's (S) statement, the expression 'kulluhum (all of the people)', that is to say all the people are like this because the ones who are not like this are scarce; in this regard, in contrast to the majority of the people who are fools, the wise

(.are not considered countable at all

Wise is a person who, when faced with deciding between useful and useless, profitable and profitless, chooses the useful and profitable. When we compare the transient world with the eternal hereafter, we perceive that the hereafter is more rewarding and profitable, for the reason that both from the point of view of length and from the aspect of infiniteness—the earthly lifespan of man ranges between seventy and eighty years and/or does go beyond a hundred years; even if we were to imagine that man's lifespan were

to last a thousand years, but still it is reckoned as nothing when compared to the eternal life of the last world—and also from the point of view of quality: the pleasure of the world is attained by way of enduring painstaking toil and exertion, and in addition to that, is intertwined with labor and hardships but we have gotten so accustomed to pains and hardships that we content ourselves with that same .gratification which is mixed with hardships

How much hard work do we have to do for the pleasure of food? We have to make money and with that procure food and even after then our jaws become tired when chewing the food. All these pains and hardships are undertaken for the sake of putting food in our mouths so as to derive [transient] pleasure from the food. In addition to that, we get tired and worn out by the effort to acquire our needs. But the pleasure of the last world is not coupled with pain and tiredness. Man does not expend any effort to procure or derive benefit from the pleasure of the hereafter and not :even after using it

... لاَ يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَلاَ يَمَسُّنَا فِيهَا لُغُوبٌ

(toil shall not touch us therein nor shall fatigue therein afflict us."(۱)..."

The hereafter is higher than this world in regard to quality and also from the point of :view of the length of durability of its everlastingness

وَالآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

(While the hereafter is better and more lasting."(٢"

p: ٣٦١

.Surat Fatir ٣٥:٣٥ -١
.Surat al-A'la ٨٧:١٧ -٢

Taking into consideration the unimaginable superiority of the hereafter over the world, which one of those two does the intellect select after comparing them with each other? Without the least doubt, the intellect selects the hereafter, but among mankind there are very few people who do such kind of comparing and act according to the deduction of their comparison for the reason that a lot of people have not .attained the reality of faith

But people who have attained the reality of faith, in addition to preferring the hereafter over the world, know that people are wise in regard to their world but are ignorant in regard to their Last Abode. In connection with earthly affairs, they distinguish very well between what is profitable and unprofitable, and are cognizant of their material benefits but have no awareness of the hereafter. They do not believe .that there is a hereafter and that it is superior to the world

Perhaps, the secret of the Noble Prophet's (S) words is that once a believer has arrived at this conviction that the majority of people are ignorant and uninformed in regard to their religion, they do not try to follow them in life and take a separate path from them. They try in connection to the Last Abode to take lesson from the errors of other people and follow the right path. From another point of view, in connection with the world they try to derive benefit from the experiences of other people, of

p: ٣٦٢

.course by following the rules and laws of religion

Lesson ٢٤: The Importance of Self-examination, Comparing Works and Shame for

Allah

point

This section of the Noble Prophet's (S) advises is related to self-inspection and shame of Allah. In the hadiths, and amongst them in the Nahj al-Balaghah (the Peak of Eloquence), a lot of emphasis has been laid on self-examination of the soul and the scholars of morals believe that one of the initial stages of edification of the soul and spiritual way-faring and journeying is self-inspection of the inner being.

"O Abu Dharr! Hold yourself accountable before they hold you accountable, and in order for your accounting to be easy tomorrow."

The likeness of this subject matter has repeatedly been related in other hadiths too:

"Hold yourself accountable before you are held accountable."(1)

But in this hadith something more has been added that does not appear in the rest of the narrated hadiths and that is that self-examination in the world makes accounting in the Resurrection lighter and easier.

Self-examination Is an Unavoidable Need

The axiom of self-inspection and examination of man's conduct is an unavoidable issue and is understandable and perceivable. Every person has some accounting and inspection to do in his life; accounting is very important especially for those who do earn money and the businessmen whose occupation involves investments, money, profit and loss.

Usually, every seller checks his account at least once a year, but in addition to this yearly accounting, he checks his accounts on a daily, weekly and monthly basis also so that at the end of the year his checking and

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1- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ٧٠, p. ٧٣.

balancing of accounts may be easier. If that businessman does not check and balance his accounts on a daily or weekly or monthly basis and allows his account books to increase, his work at the end of the year becomes hard and sometimes makes big .mistakes as a result of heedlessness and inattention

What is being asserted is that just like a trader who checks and balances his accounts with careful attention to know how much profit and loss he is making and does not bypass a single coin, a believer too ought to settle his accounts with Allah and in this regard he ought to be careful of the trickery of his soul and fear lest his soul deceive him by justifying sins and in this way not let him settle his accounts with accuracy. He ought to demand a convincing reply and hold himself as accountable as the divine .agents will hold him accountable on the Day of Resurrection

Principally, accounting for sin is more accurate if it occurs on time and is not left to accumulate and man gets a more accurate result and is confronted by less problems on the one hand and on the other hand if accounting for sins is delayed, with the passage of time we forget what sins we have committed and thus they accumulate. In addition, when we pay no heed to our sins, we do think about the alternative and .also we do not believe the thickness of our sins

If

it were asked of me what sins I have committed and I were very honest, I would say a thousand sins despite that if I were more accurate in my accounting, I would gather that perhaps in a day, week and month I commit more than a thousand! When all these sins are put together, a great astronomical figure is made. We are heedless and we imagine that because we have not committed theft and murder, the rest of the sins are not worthy of the name. Perhaps, if we were called sinners, we would protest and say, "What sin have we committed to be called wrong doers?" The nature of .man's soul is forgetfulness, especially in regard to that which is harmful for it

One of the psychological subjects is that because mentioning and reminding man about his errors and sins gives rise to shame and shyness, he is not inclined to pay heed to them and he endeavors to forget those shortcomings. Nowadays, psychologists have made a lot of progress in the field of forgetfulness and remembrance of events which have come to pass and how man ought to forget things and what factors play a role in forgetfulness and how man ought to make himself forget things and also in regard to what causes give rise to a strong memory so that man may easily remember events? Unfortunately—in spite of the fact that examining and analyzing these topics is good and very important for our religion and world—we

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.have not made advances in these fields and have lagged behind the others

Therefore, man does not like to attribute that which he does not like to himself. According to psychological research, man who is after committing every kind of crime and iniquity strives to justify his sins. Because of the pain which he endures as a result of committing that sin and for the reason that he seeks to get free from guilt of consciousness, he desires to evade the guilt of perpetrating sin and, in other words, he strives to show himself as not being at fault and endeavors to either forget his sin or lays the blame on other people, or the environment, or the world, or the Devil, or .the structure of the society and/or other factors

In this way, he takes refuge in these defense mechanisms in order to defend himself and once seeking refuge in a defense mechanism becomes firm in man and he justifies every sin and does not hold himself accountable and does not judge fairly in regard to himself and did not condemn himself for his sinful deeds, there is also the danger of committing greater sins for the reason that he with his action has liberated himself from the scourge of sin and on account of that he has no pain and remorse so as to be dreadful of the consequences of sin. It is here that the ill consequences of justifying sins and also its dangers are greater than the

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.ill consequences of sin itself

Because man has self-love, in addition to wanting to be respectable in the society, he also desires to be proud of himself; he does not want to be ashamed of himself and perceive himself as incomplete. He wants to conceive himself as complete and honorable. For this reason, he expels from his memory that which is a cause of his incompleteness and decadence; because remembering them gives rise to his feeling .low and light and this is opposed to the natural inclination and desire of man

Taking this point into consideration, if in this regard there are no factors which remind man of those imperfections and defects and deviations, a bad end lies in wait for him and he will have to bear irreparable losses. It is for this reason that in the hadiths in the direction of mentioning factors which remind man of his bad deeds and effort to make up and compensate for them has been chosen as the best way and the scholars of ethics, taking these hadiths into consideration, have mentioned the three stages of 'preconditioning', 'alertness' and 'accounting' for people who plan to undertake edification of character and purification of the soul in such books as "Mi'raj al-Sa'adah", "Jami' al-Sa'adat" and "Ihya' al-'Ulum."

Preconditioning, Watching over the Soul and Self-examination

point

Preconditioning [musharitah], watching over the soul [muraqibah] and self-examination [muhasibah]

(a) Preconditioning [musharitah]

When man wakes up in the morning, he ought to pay heed to this fact that new capital has been placed in his hands: if we did not wake

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?up from sleep and the soul left our bodies for ever, would our life not come to an end

اللهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِى لَمْ تَمُتْ فِى مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِى قَضَى عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَى إِلى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى إِنَّ فِى

ذَلِکَ لأَیَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ یَتَفَکَّرُونَ

Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their“ sleep; then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the others back till an appointed term; most surely there are signs in this for a (people who reflect.”(۱)

Therefore, by sleeping, we pass through a stage of death and we lack any activity in the same way that the dead lack activity. Now, once we wake up again from sleep, a second life has been granted to us and new capital has been placed at our disposal. For this reason, we ought to thank Allah and address our souls in this way, “O soul! Allah has placed this invaluable capital at your disposal so that by means of it you may secure the prosperity of the hereafter. If you commit error, you will lose your capital ”.and meet with loss and failure

We ought to set conditions with our souls and get it to promise and pledge not to come close to sin and not to do anything which will result in the anger and discontent of Allah. We ought to make our souls promise to use this invaluable capital in the

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۱- Surat al-Zumar ۳۹:۴۲.

way that is pleasing to Allah, the Exalted, and gives fruit to prosperity for man because the pleasure of Allah results in man’s prosperity and if Allah is not pleased, man cannot and does not attain prosperity. We ought to set conditions on our souls not to be lazy at discharging incumbent duties [wajibat] and divine duties and not to .abstain from doing every good deed that is feasible for it

It is better for this preconditioning [musharitah] to de done after the morning prayers and the supplications that follow it [ta‘qibat] and man has to address his soul in this way, “O soul! I have no capital save this limited life and if I lose it, all my capital will have been lost in thin air. O Soul! Today Allah, the Merciful, has again granted me a grace period and if I were dead today, I would wish that Allah returns me to the world

so as to make ready my provisions. For this reason, O Soul! Imagine that you were dead and requested to be brought back to the world and you were brought back. Therefore, be careful lest your today is wasted for the reason that every breath that you take is a precious and invaluable jewel and it is possible to attain eternal ".pleasures by means of it so as to give fruit to lasting peace

[b) Watching over the Soul [muraqibah

After the stage of pre-conditioning [musharitah] comes the stage of watching over the soul [muraqibah]; this denotes that during the

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course of the day man ought to be careful to act according to what he has preconditioned on himself and be careful at every moment not to commit sin. He .ought to see whether he is traversing the right path or the way of sin and error

To put it another way, watching over the self is tantamount to piety [taqwa], because piety implies watching over divine values and protecting good works: it has been narrated in a hadith that piety is similar to a man who walks in the darkest of nights in a desert full of snakes and scorpions and it is possible for that every moment he may .step either on a snake or scorpion and put an end to his life once bitten by them

Now, in the same way that he takes utmost care and makes sound judgment so as not to be bitten by either a snake or scorpion, man has to also have perfect precaution and care to go free from the danger of the Devil and not be afflicted by the retribution of the hereafter. Therefore, piety denotes that man has to continually .meditate about his deeds and perceive the consequences of his deeds

:Imam al-Sadiq ('a) states

A man came to the Noble Prophet (S) and said, 'O Prophet of Allah! Give me some" advice.' The Noble Prophet asked him three times, 'Are you going to accept my advice if I give it to you?' The man replied, 'Yes O Prophet of

Allah.' The Noble Prophet (S) stated, 'If you make up your mind to do something, think about its consequences. If the results of your decision are good, discharge that work and if its end were bad, abstain from it.'"

Keeping permanent watch over the self is attained as a result of knowledge of Allah and due to certitude that Allah, the Exalted, is aware of the inner secrets of man and nothing is hidden from Him. For this reason, there is no deed which man commits without needing watch over the soul at the time of doing it because man in his deeds is either in a state of obeying and worshiping Allah and/or in a state of committing sin and/or in a state of doing deeds that are permissible but not recommendable.

His watching over the self at the time of obedience and worship of Allah denotes that he ought to have purity of intention and striving in the direction of perfecting his deeds and observing the etiquettes of worship and protecting his deeds from decadence. His self-vigilance at the time of sinning implies repentance, feeling remorse, detaching his heart from misdeeds, feeling shame and resolving to make up for his wrong doing.

His watching over the self and being vigilant at the time of doing permissible but not recommendable deeds means that he observes correct conduct and always keeps in mind the Giver at the time of deriving benefit from the blessings of this world and being thankful for

those gifts and bearing afflictions with the utmost of patience.

(c) Self-examination [muhasibah]

Self-examination [muhasibah] is the third stage which the scholars of hadith have recommended for the edification of character and purification of the soul. Self-examination denotes examining his daily deeds at the end of the day and asking himself whether he has discharged the divine and incumbent duties which lie on his

.shoulders or not

If after self-inspection he perceives that he has discharged his divine duties and his daily deeds were concordant with the legal criteria, he ought to be thankful to Allah for granting him the opportunity to perform his duties for the reason that discharging divine duties is dependent on the grace of Allah and man ought to be thankful for that .term

Likewise, he ought to try on the other days to continue that same sound and correct path. But if he has not discharged his divine duties, or he has performed them imperfectly and has been afflicted by error and deviation, he ought to endeavor to make up for them by discharging recommendable [mustahabb] and especially optional prayers and castigate himself and repent when he has not discharged his .divine duties and has committed sin against Allah so that Allah may forgive his sins

Likewise, he ought to try to make up for his sins by doing good and praiseworthy deeds; in this case, his sins will be compensated for at the time of sleeping and no sin remains for him. This is that same self-examination which

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the Infallible and Pure Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have recommended for their companions and scholars of ethics on the basis of the orders of the Infallible and Pure Ahl al-Bayt ('a) .have advised other people to be accountable for their deeds

Taking into consideration the role and importance of self-examination in the :edification of the character and purification of the soul, Imam al-Kazim ('a) states

He is not from us a person who does not hold himself accountable for his deeds;" therefore if he has done good deeds, he ought to ask Allah to increase his good deeds and when he has committed sinful and bad deeds, he ought to seek forgiveness from (Allah and return to Him."(١

:The Noble Prophet (S) orders his companions thus

Should I inform you about the most intelligent of intelligent people and the most“ ignorant of ignorant people?” The companions responded, “Yes, O Prophet of Allah.” The Noble Prophet (S) stated, “The most intelligent of people is the one who holds his soul accountable and performs good deeds for his life after death and the most foolish of people is the one who follows his carnal soul and always asks Allah to grant (him his wishes.”(۲

The Benefit of Self-examining the Soul

One of the benefits of holding the soul accountable is that once man has perceived his errors, he immediately makes up for them and does not let their effects to remain in his soul. If man does not hold himself accountable, he will not know how many sins he has committed. If

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.Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ۴, p. ۱۹۱ -۱

.Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۷۰, p. ۶۹ -۲

it were asked of us how many good deeds and how many ugly and unacceptable .works we have done and where we committed error, we would not know

But when we have undertaken to hold the soul accountable for its deeds, we remember every one of the deeds we have done and know how many of our sins .were corrected and how many were not corrected

When man does not pay any heed to the sins he commits, those sins leave an effect in his soul and a black spot is created in his heart and with the increase of sin, the blackness and darkness of the heart encompasses his heart and, all too often, no bright spot remains in it. This point has been inferred from the purport of some of the :hadiths, one of which is Imam al-Sadiq’s (‘a) statement

Whenever an individual commits sin, a dark spot arises in his heart. Therefore, the“ blackness of the spot is erased whenever he repents and it is increased whenever he commits sin, to the extent that it becomes predominant over his entire heart and

(never will he get guided."(1)

Sometimes, man does not comprehend this and when he understands that sin has encompassed his entire heart and if he compares his present state with his previous state, he perceives that a blatantly obscene change has taken place in him.

Some of the people who for some time are pre-occupied with learning and acquisition of knowledge, taking into consideration the decline which

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1- Usul al-Kafi (with Farsi translation), vol. ٣, p. ٣٧٣.

they witness in their souls, morals and conduct, thus tell themselves: at the beginning of education, we had high spirits and purity of heart, what has caused that high spiritedness to decline by the passage of time?

Some people blame this decline on studies; they imagine that studying causes the darkness of heart. This group of people does not want to concede that their sins are the cause of the decadence and degeneration of souls and the darkness of their hearts. Without the least doubt, studying is one of the good and invaluable deeds of man; even if sometimes these same good deeds of man have a great deal of defects which arise from the weakness and inattention of man.

This is one kind of self-deception which man lays his blame on once he sees that he gets tired of studying and/or he has no hope of being successful, or when studying is not compatible with his carnal desires, he blames it as a cause of his defect and decadence and says that studying has caused his heart to become dark because at the beginning of our studies and education, our hearts were pure! It is true that at the beginning our hearts were pure and now they have become impure, but the cause is not studying; on the contrary, the cause is not studying correctly. The cause of darkness of our hearts is sins and education devoid of purification of the soul and edification of character.

Yes, when man does

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not hold himself accountable, the real and existential effects of sin do not get effaced and make his heart black and he does not have the least attention. This is similar to a person who wears white clothes and black spots regularly fall on it and he does not pay any attention to them and does not see that his clothes have become dirty and impure, without the least doubt with the continued increase of those black spots his clothes become so dirty and disgusting that they raise the disgust of every looker, but .the owner does not know anything because he has closed his eyes

The greatest defect and loss of abstaining from holding the soul accountable for its deeds is that the effects of sin remain embedded in his soul and man day by day becomes more contaminated and his heart becomes darker and he becomes more distanced from Allah but he himself is not aware of this and often times he imagines that he is a good and capable man and falsely prides himself on being this and that. In spite of the fact, everyday he is declining and in the end he falls in the pit of :decadence and ill fate

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالاً * الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِى الْحَيَوةِ الدُّنْيا وَهُمْ يَحسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

Say, ‘Shall We inform you of the greatest losers in their deeds? These are those“ whose labor is lost in this world’s life and they think that they are well

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(versed in skill of the hands’.”(١

Allamah Tabataba’i, may he reside in Allah’s Garden of eternal bliss, in interpretation ‘ of this verse, states: “Loss and failure in regard to work and occupation whose aim is making profit occurs when that goal is not attained and/or when capital is decreased and/or once man’s efforts are wasted. In the blessed verse, wasted effort implies losing and wasting effort; like when man loses his way and does not arrive at his .destination as a result of that

Sometimes, man's losing in work and occupation is a result of inexperience at work" and/or not being acquainted with the way and/or because of other undesirable causes. This loss and depletion is likely to be made up for the reason that there is hope of the loser waking up and starting all over again and regaining what has been lost and making up for the past. But sometimes it happens that man meets with loss and imagines that he has made profit. He makes loss and believes that he has attained nothing save profit! This is the worst loss and misfortune for which there is .no hope of making up for

Man's duty in the world is only to struggle for prosperity and he ought not to wish" save for that. If he is on the path of right and has attained his aim, he has arrived at the goal. But if he deviates from the right path and does not conceive his deviation and mistake, he has

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۱- Surat al-Kahf ۱۸:۱۰۳-۱۰۴.

.made loss in his efforts and endeavors but there is hope of his being saved

But if he deviates from the right path and attains other than right and insists on it and never does a ray of right become manifest for him, a curtain has been drawn over his soul and has made him afflicted with the self-conceit and pride of the Age of Ignorance. This person is the biggest loser in his deeds and efforts for the reason that there is no hope in making up for his losses and there is no hope of his attaining prosperity; this is that same point which Allah has mentioned in the blessed verse."(۱)

As has been previously said, one of the benefits of accountability of the soul is that man perceives his errors and embarks upon correcting them. He does not let the .existential effects of sin remain in the soul and gives rise to its degeneration

The Noble Prophet (S) has explained this reality with two expressions which are: "Hold your soul accountable before others hold you accountable;" and after that he states, "Because that will make your accountability easier tomorrow on the Day of

Resurrection;" for the reason that if you hold yourself accountable for your deeds, you embark upon remedying and making up for your errors and deviations and the result is that your accountability on the Day of Resurrection will be light.

But if you do not do thus, your sins will accumulate and your problems on

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۱- Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. ۳, p. ۴۳۰.

the Day of Resurrection will be increased. In the world, you do not know and are unaware of how much you have fallen, but when you will be confronted with the list of your deeds and see your innumerable sins, regret as a result of those sins is more torturing than the torture of hell. In continuation of the hadith, the Noble Prophet states:

"Weigh yourself before they weigh you and be ready before you are presented in the presence of Allah on the Day of Resurrection before there is nothing which remains hidden from Him."

In regard to the weighing of deeds, Allah, the Exalted, states:

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ...

"And the measuring out on that Day will be just..."(۱)

Measuring and weighing of deeds is one of our religious beliefs. Measuring of deeds denotes comparing and counting their ampleness and meagerness, now if we embark upon measuring our own deeds and conceive that our sins have become heavy, we try to make our burdens lighter. But if we do not embark upon weighing our deeds, and do not weigh our sins and do not perceive their effects on our souls, one day we will find ourselves in the presence of Allah and there we will be disgraced and be caught in regrets.

Therefore, a person who measures his deeds and holds himself accountable for them

will be light-burdened in the presence of Allah for the reason that he has made up for his sins and ethical weaknesses. But that person who has

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.Surat al-A'raf ۷:۸ -۱

not undertaken to weigh his deeds and hold himself accountable for his deeds, he will be regretful on the day when his great and small deeds will be made apparent before .Allah, the Exalted

In order not to be affected by regret on the Day of Resurrection, start meditating right now and perceive your deeds right now. Imagine that your lives have come to an end—because no one is certain whether he will remain alive tomorrow or not—and your deeds have been presented to Allah. Perceive what you have presented to Allah .and what state you have before Him

If the Pure Imams ('a) take refuge in Allah on the Day of the great presentation when all deeds are made apparent before Allah, it is befitting that we hold ourselves accountable for our daily deeds and make up for any ugly and undesirable deeds we have committed so that they are erased from the record of our deeds in order not to be afflicted by the remorse and regret of that day, which is one of the most deadly .regrets

Shame as a Result of the Ugliness of Works

Without the least doubt, once talk about the presentation of works before Allah comes about, discussion about shame and disgrace of Allah also arises. When man does a bad deed and/or perpetrates treachery and thereafter forgets, he is indifferent and no change arises in his soul. It is for this reason that we are weak and we do not correctly conceive realities and also for the sake of gradually perceiving reality and

the truth, we cite a sensible example: imagine that two people have been friends for .long years and had promised not to betray each other

Now, if one of those two betrays his friend, if his betrayed friend was not aware of the treachery and/or forgets the betrayal, his conduct is normal when he meets his treacherous friend. But if his friend takes pictures of the scene of betrayal and after a period of time shows it to the betrayer and says, "You had promised not to betray me "?and used to talk a lot about the value of friendship, why then have you betrayed me

It is here that shame and disgrace overtakes the betrayer which is harder than torture and punishment. He had committed treachery and had forgotten the scene of treachery and did not believe that his friend had known about his betrayal. If his ?friend shows him the scene of his treachery, what state is he going to be in

We have given an example of filming and taking pictures of the scene of treachery for the presentation of deeds in the world, but on the Day of Resurrection deeds themselves will be present. Even if our intellect does not conceive the manner of the presence and embodiment of works, but on the basis of our religious beliefs, the :embodiment of deeds has been proved

... وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا...

(and what they had done they shall find present there..."(١)..."

In this verse Allah explicitly explains the

.Surat al-Kahf ١٨:٤٩ -١

presence of deeds themselves and it is not possible to interpret the verse otherwise and in addition to this verse, other verses also have explained the embodiment of :deeds; amongst them

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ...

On the day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has“ (done of evil...”(۱

Even if on the Day of Resurrection, pictures and films of our works were shown, we still could not deny them. If they show us the works themselves and/or present films of them, and say that on such a day at such and such a time or on such a night you did such a deed, when we come face to face with Allah, the shame that will overcome us .will be harder than any torture

In order for man to remember the Day of Resurrection and the presentation of works on the Day of Resurrection, it is befitting to picture or describe the scene of presentation of works and the disgrace of sin and disobedience of Allah and/or if it is disgraceful right in this world, man ought to picture it for himself. He ought to imagine that he were doing some ugly deed and all of a sudden a child appeared and saw his .ugly deeds

Perhaps, it has occurred for every person that he was busy committing an ugly deed without looking around himself and all of a sudden finds out that someone

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۱- ۳:۳۰ Surat Al ‘Imran.

else has been watching him. In such circumstances, man becomes so ashamed that he wishes he could become water and sink in the ground; worse if that person were not a child but a full grown man having enough understanding and intelligence and worse still if that person had a right on man and that ugly deed were a betrayal in his .right

There is no doubt that whatever we have is from Allah and every indecent deed is considered as treachery against Him. If man thinks properly, he will perceive that he commits sin in the presence of the Owner of Right and it is a betrayal to Him; he conceives that he is sinning against the One who gave him existence and his ability to .commit this same misdeed is from Him

The power of breathing and speaking and everything that we have is from Him. He has given us all these blessings and abilities in order to employ them in the way of our perfection and gaining proximity to Him, therefore it is very shameful of us to use Allah's blessings in the way of sin and distancing ourselves from Him and treachery .against Him

Taking into consideration what has been mentioned, if man sets apart a few minutes of every night to holding his soul accountable for what it has done and visualize his deeds before himself, in the presence of Allah who is the Giver of whatever he has, without the least doubt this self-examination and

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taking into consideration the fact that error and sin occur in the presence of Allah will lead to a reduction of sin, even if it does not lead to sincere contrition and repentance which leads to a complete effacement of all the sins; just this feeling of shame reduces an amount of the burden of sin and prevents the settlement and establishment of the effects of sin and after that man does not easily commit sin. Now, once this state of admonition and attention to the fact that he is in the presence .of Allah becomes his permanent disposition of mind, he will not commit sin anymore

The Concept and Domain of Shame and Shyness

O Abu Dharr! Be modest with Allah. I swear upon Allah at Whose disposal my life is," whenever I go to present my needs to Him, I cover my head and face and feel shy of ".the two angels accompanying me

The issue of shame and modesty is very important and unfortunately there exist wrong and unsound understandings in regard to it. As a result of the influence and penetration of foreign culture, intellectual problems have arisen for us in regard to shame and modesty. For this reason, it is befitting for us to examine or ponder about this issue. Even if we are inclined in this opportunity to content ourselves with mentioning admonitions and perhaps we may not have a session for preparing a plan for these subjects, but still we find it necessary to cite the intellectual substructures of

:this issue

We all know

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that in the Islamic culture, shame and modesty are as worthy values and, in contrast, impudence and lack of shame are considered as uncouth and counter values. In the past, whenever they wanted to curse or use indecent words at someone, they used to call that person impudent because the word impudent used to be considered as an insult and a curse. Whenever they wanted to emphasize and deepen their curse, they used to call that person unashamed. Calling someone unashamed used to be a very bad insult in our culture. But nowadays, in western culture and the world of infidelity, .shame and modesty are considered as defects

One of the issues that has a lot of application nowadays in psychology, the philosophy of ethics and personal training and instruction is the issue of shame and modesty. Should man be shy and modest in the point of view of psychology, ethics and the principles of personal instruction? Of course, when we say that in western culture, in contrast to Islamic culture, lack of modesty is encouraged, we do not mean that our understanding of shame and modesty and our conduct are completely correct; it is for this reason that this topic or category is in need of examination and for the sake of :making the subject clear, we will hint at the root of shame and modesty in man

On the basis of the innate instinct which exists in man’s natural disposition, if man ,commits a deed which he knows is indecent

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a special emotion by the name of shame arises in his inner being. Of course, the appearance of this psychological emotion and spiritual reaction depends on two matters: the first is that man ought to perceive his deeds as bad, and the second is that his natural temperament ought not to have been ridiculed because man has a lot of natural states, but when he tramples his natural disposition underfoot, those

.natural states become weak and faint-colored and bit by bit become effaced

Therefore, the feeling of shame in regard to bad and ugly deeds is a natural thing, but knowing the ugly and bad sometimes takes place by means of the intellect and at other times by means of personal training and instruction and at other instances man follows the environment and generally held beliefs in order to decide what is good and .bad

In the beginning, parents inculcate their child with what is bad and what is good, now if that inculcation is properly done, once a child does something bad and becomes aware that someone is observing him, he feels ashamed and embarrassed as a result of his natural temperament and instincts and drops his head and sometimes even sweats. This reaction in connection with an ugly deed from that child is natural and as has been said, he learns the good and bad by means of personal training and .instruction from his parents

The Causes of Propagating Wrong Manners and False Customs

Besides ethical and Islamic values, another set of manners and customs which have been

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promoted and circulated among us as a result of the demands of the environment, the society and/or as a result of tribalism and other national and racial causes and .thus we consider certain things as either good or bad

This perception is not related to the divine law and it is likely that they may even be against the divine law: for example, we conceive as bad a child speaking in front of an elderly person and as soon as a child wants to speak in front of an elderly person, we say, “Keep quite! This is bad.” Because a child learns what is good and bad from his .parents and those around him, he imagines that this is indeed a very bad deed

The very fact that he notices other people reacting negatively in regard to his deeds and frowning and showing an unpleasant reaction, he comprehends the badness and

ugliness of his deeds and feels shy and ashamed when he does that deed. For this reason, he does not dare to talk in the presence of an elderly person, and feels shy to .speak in class and to ask questions from the teacher

With the passage of time this state becomes his permanent habit of mind and the more he grows and his age increases, he feels shy and ashamed at the time of speaking. When he intends to ask questions in higher classes and contribute .positively, his heart beats and his color changes

Without the least doubt, divine

law does not approve of man not being able to speak out his opinion, or to ask his .question or speak the right word

The likeness of this wrong understanding exists in regard to the modesty of a woman; in our culture a woman's biggest capital is modesty, but in relation to the instances of applying this value concept, our society has gone to improper extremes. A chaste and veiled girl is brought up in such a way that she is not able to utter a word in front of a strange man and they make her perceive that this is the proper result and reflex of .modesty

From the Islamic point of view, a woman has to nurture her power of speech in the presence of other people, but it is very proper and acceptable not to speak in instances where there is no need to speak and/or not to make her voice so soft and tender so as to attract the attention of other people; but she ought not to be made to believe that never has a strange person got to hear her voice. In reality, we have not .been successful at separating different issues and aspects from each other

If a woman's speaking in front of other people were unacceptable, who would have managed to make that fluent and excellent speech which Her Holiness Fatimah al-Zahra' ('a) made in the Mosque of Medina? Or, who would have managed to make (that speech which Zaynab Kubra' ('a

made in the session of Ibn Ziyad? Yes, divine law says that a woman ought not to speak in such a way that attracts and deviates others and the way of speaking is not supposed to be motivated by arousing the sensual feelings of other people, otherwise .it is not proper for a woman not to have the ability to speak

We have some extremist tendencies and in some sense prodigality in one set of issues—especially ethical and instructional values—which have left behind very bad effects. When westerners noticed these extremist tendencies and embarked upon remedying their ill effects, they fell into prodigality and put aside those values from the origin. We came forward and raised our children to be shy and not speak in front of the elders. We have brought up our women so as not to be able to speak in front of .men

When the westerners noticed that was improper and wrong, they went further and asserted that a child has to be absolutely free to do whatever he wants and a woman has to be free and not be shy or ashamed of anything; even if she were to strip naked in front of men! This improper understanding of shame and modesty and feeling shy has had such an effect in the West that they have completely done away with limitations and restrictions: "An ignorant man is either excessive or prodigal."

Neither have we comprehended Islam correctly nor have the westerners traversed the right path. Neither have

we applied the values of Islam correctly nor have they paid any heed to divine values. Of course, we cannot have any expectations from them because the basis of their .thinking is corrupt. It is not even clear whether they have any faith in God

In the West, it is not clear whether even believing Christians who go to church have any faith in God and only profess their faith in religion and religious values by the tongue otherwise in reality they have no inclination towards religion. Therefore, no

expectation can be had of them. The question is why have we not correctly comprehended the truths of Islam and have not correctly acted upon them and have not properly applied them and have not derived right and praiseworthy benefit from ?them so as not to be reproached by other people

Taking what has been said into consideration, it is incumbent for the realm and domain of shame and modesty to be made clear. We have to clarify what the concept of shame and modesty is and where are they proper and where are shyness and modesty unacceptable and blameworthy? Without doubt, being shy is not desirable in all instances and not every weakness that arises as a result of shyness is good or desirable. Good and bad ought to be known and made compatible with decisive logic .[‘and divine law [shar

Why do we tell our children that speaking in front of elderly people is bad? Is this Allah's and the

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Noble Prophet's (S) order? Was the conduct of the Pure and Infallible Imams ('a) like this? Without the least doubt, this is not true at all. Yes, shouting and hollering is not good for anyone at all and, of course, bit by bit a child learns as a result of correct teaching how to speak in such a manner that the listener hears him and not to raise .his voice higher than the limits; but not that the child completely ought not to talk

Who has said that a woman ought to be so shy as to not have even the ability to talk in front of other people such that if she wanted to prove her claim in court or to enjoin ?!what is right and forbid what is wrong, she even lacks the ability to utter a word

Therefore, we ought to set good and bad on Islamic criteria; we ought to perceive what is bad and what is good from an Islamic point of view; that is when shyness and modesty in contrast to what is really bad are desirable, not the modesty which is a custom and habit made and enjoined by one special community, tribe, nation and/or .race and location

This modesty is a product of manners and customs, not ethical and spiritual values. Manners and customs, if they are in the direction of Islamic values, are respectable and if they are opposed to what is right and divine values, are counter values. Therefore, in

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order for us to properly follow the injunctions of Islam, we ought to first know the real .bad and real good so as to know when to feel shy and modest

It has been said that knowing the good and bad, on the basis of natural instincts, after doing an ugly deed man feels shy. Now, if he resists this natural instinct and fights against his natural disposition, bit by bit, that natural instinct of shame and modesty becomes weak; and the quality of immodesty becomes firm in man. This matter is not confined to shame and modesty; on the contrary, if man resists every natural instinct, .that natural instinct becomes weak bit by bit and becomes ineffective

For people who commit sin and pay no heed to its consequences, bit by bit, the quality of sin becomes strong in them and after that, even if they know that they are committing sin in the presence of Allah, they do not feel any shame because their .natural temperament has been subdued

Yes, lack of self-inspection of the soul and not holding it accountable for its deeds bit by bit renders man's natural disposition ineffective and in the end man does not have any qualms with committing sin and does not reprimand his inner conscience. Man who initially used to feel ashamed whenever he committed sin no longer has any .qualms about committing sin

Of course, there are other causes too which lead to the extermination of shyness and modesty and mention of

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them has been made in the hadiths, but the main cause of lack of shame and immodesty is resistance in the face of the natural instinct of shame and modesty and

paying no heed to it. In contrast, in order to strengthen that natural instinct, certain points have to be taken into consideration amongst which is the point which the Noble Prophet (S) has recommended to Abu Dharr that he ought to feel shame in the face of Allah and thereafter states, "Whenever I supplicate Allah, I cover my head and face and feel shy of the two angels accompanying me." This conduct is intended to strengthen the natural instinct of shame and modesty.

Abu Sa'id Khidri in regard to the immense modesty of the Noble Prophet (S) says:

"The Noble Prophet (S) was more modest than a virgin girl in the bridal chamber and used to keep quite whenever he got angry and we used to discern his anger from his face."(۱)

It is well-known that Salman Farsi stated, "I have never in all my life looked at my private parts." Salman lived a very long life and beyond the shadow of doubt a person who is like this does not commit adultery or fornication. But if man is heedless, and does not make any difference between good and bad, bit by bit his natural modesty gets effaced and the causes and incentives of sin impel him towards sin. He is continually on the verge of sin and collapse. But if

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۱- Bihar al-Anwar, vol. ۱۶, p. ۲۳۰.

he is careful of his conduct right from the beginning and strengthens his natural instinct, the spirit of shame and modesty becomes firm in him and he does not get contaminated by sin.

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know
al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It’s obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism- places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named “Ghaemiyeh Book Market” with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

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